

## UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

March 20, 2012

### Minutes

**Present:** A. Allen (President), G. Preuss (President-Elect), J. Schmertz (Secretary), P. Lyons (Past President)

J. Ahmad, C. Bachman, R. Beebe, M. Benavides, C. Burnett, A. Chiaviello, G. Evans, S. Farris, J. Hackett, J. Harned, V. Hrynkiv, P. Kintzele, P. Li, R. McMahon, C. Nguyen, W. Nowak, A. Pavelich, S. Penkar, A. Sikka, L. Spears, K. Switzer, V. Tzouanas, W. Waller, I. Wang, V. Zafiris

**Absent:** R. Scott

Allen announced the Staff Chili Cookoff and asked for volunteers for a Faculty Senate team.

Elections for Senate officers, senators, and committee members are under way, in that order. He encouraged Faculty to run or nominate others for the positions of President-elect and Secretary.

Allen gave the floor to Preuss, who reported on a visit he had made to a THECB meeting. Faculty workload was on the agenda but not significantly discussed. He noted that THECB wanted to start evaluating undergraduate programs for continuation on 7 year cycles and requiring universities to call in outside reviewers. Assistant Commissioner MacGregor Stephenson is rigorous in cutting graduate programs with low enrollments, such as physics programs that serve minority populations, saying these students should just “go to better schools.”

Allen said that a search had begun for a new Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences. The committee has been appointed and the search has been advertised. Faculty are concerned about getting inadequate input into the search. Part of the problem is that there is no policy covering the hiring of academic administrators; PS 02.B.14 covers the hiring of staff, but primarily from an ESO perspective. He asked Provost Chapman what the process for seeking faculty input into this search will be.

Chapman said that the search committee will review the applications based on criteria and choose candidates whom they will bring to campus for 1-2 days to interview with various groups of faculty, staff, and administrators. He agreed that existing policy is ESO-driven. He said his role is “minimal” in the process. For example, with a current search for an assistant VP for research and sponsored programs, he will receive recommendations from the search committee but ESO handles all negotiations. He said UHD needs a new policy to allow for more input from both faculty and administrators.

Allen said that he had just sent a charge to Faculty Affairs to begin the process, with the goal of beginning the process. He was not sure where the policy would appear on FAC’s docket or what stakeholders thought it should look like.

Schmertz said she had queried the faculty from her college (H&SS) about the search. The faculty in that college urge that the hiring process occur during the academic year, in particular the interview process. They further request that the search and the search committee members be publicly announced.

Sikka said she had seen the ad and found it “uninspiring.” The choice of an H&SS dean is important because such colleges provide the liberal arts and Gen Ed “backbone” for the university. Faculty in the college have told her that the ad would have been more likely to invite highly qualified applicants from across the nation if college faculty had been able to help create it. She said faculty, and the academic side, should have the primary role in the writing of ads for academic positions.

Chapman said there is a “template” for writing ads, and “we did the best we could.”

President Flores said that he did not want interviews to happen when the faculty are not on campus: this would be fair to neither the faculty nor the candidates themselves. He committed to changing the policy to include faculty participation and to putting those principles into practice in the current search. He noted that there will be three dean positions that will be filled in the coming year, so it is important we get the first search off on the right foot. He agreed that the ad did not reflect the importance of the position and added that it failed to mention the university’s new vision and mission. He said the ad could be revised; the provost’s ad had been.

Switzer asked whether there was a timeline or start date for the position. Chapman said that it was possible the interviewing and hiring could be completed this semester, but because of “negotiations” with ESO, the ad came out late in the semester. A more likely scenario is that we will be interviewing in the fall. He is hoping to have the new dean on campus before January. Switzer asked how long the interim dean would occupy the position. Chapman said probably at least until fall. The interim dean would remain in his position until the permanent dean was hired.

Sikka asked for clarification: would it still be possible for the ad to be revised with search committee input? Chapman said this was the first he had heard there would be a chance to do so. He hopes it is possible. Schmertz stated she thought faculty in H&SS would agree it was important for the search committee to guide any possible revisions to the ad.

Flores announced that UHD had made the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with distinction. We were only one of two TX universities to do so. He hopes we will set as our next goal being one of the 5 national winners; we do the same things the winners do, but need to document it, particularly our high impact practices. He commended Jean DeWitt for her leadership of service learning. Allen said he is proud of being from UHD and thinks we are up to the challenge of meeting the next level.

#### **Announcement from Johanna Wolfe (VP for Advancement and External Relations)**

Wolfe said that a month-long faculty-staff fundraising campaign was kicked off today, headed by Jaha Williams (director of individual giving). She urged faculty to participate, as donors look to the level of support a university gets from its own employees as a gauge for how much they give. Faculty can choose where their donations go, e.g. H&SS faculty could donate to a scholarship fund in memory of Dean Susan Ahern. What is important is degree of participation, not a target monetary goal, and donations can be made as a one-time deduction or through regular payroll deductions. A lunch for early donors (administrators and chairs) has already raised \$16,000. A form for donation is available on the UHD homepage. Direct queries about various donation options to Williams.

Allen said he endorsed the campaign and planned to contribute himself. President Flores displayed the shirt he had received at the lunch and urged a participation rate of 75% of faculty. He underscored the importance of institutional support in securing matching donations.

### **Report from Gary Stading (in his capacity as the chair of University Curriculum Committee)**

UCC was charged over the summer to put the process of creating new courses online. He handed the task to Erin Mayer, executive director of IT. Mayer would introduce the proposed process to Senate. Stading noted that these efforts began prior to, and separately from, the process of making changes to the core curriculum. The latter changes, since they are one-time curriculum changes, will be handled outside normal curriculum procedures. At some point a process will be added for changes to the core. UCC is helping IT test the system.

Mayer went through a powerpoint of a flow chart which automated all the steps in the process of course approval. The process would be visible to all faculty and it would be based on the previous Course Inventory Update (CIU) form. As the proposal moves through various stages of approval, the steps will be visible and emails will be sent notifying the next party in the approval chain that action on their part was required. That party rejects, approves, or sends the documents back for to the previous level to review.

Switzer asked if the original CIU form would still exist. Mayer said yes, and it would be visible as an attachment.

Evans asked if there would be a separate process developed for program changes. Stading said he had not considered this; it seemed that such a process would need to be developed.

Schmertz asked what the role of department curriculum committees would be in proposing courses for the new core. How will it be possible for changes to receive departmental approval, as per normal procedure? Stading said the question was outside the scope of the present concern but he could take questions later.

Sikka said descriptions of Gen Ed were sprinkled throughout the catalog and she had never seen a clear description of it. Could there be a link somewhere that laid it out? Switzer said she was confused by the way Gen Ed and the new core curriculum seemed to be referred to interchangeably, and asked what the difference was. Pavelich said Gen Ed signified the core plus various institutional requirements—in our case, W and S courses.

Preuss asked if it would still be possible to fill in “X” for the course number. Stading said it would.

Several faculty had questions about who would be able to view the entire process of course approval. Sikka said for the purposes of proposing interdisciplinary honors courses, it would be helpful to know what was in the pipeline in the majors. Mayer responded that changes made would be visible to all faculty. Evans said that departmental curriculum committees frequently bounced proposals back and forth between faculty and committees; she did not think this part of the process needed to be visible. Ahmad said she was concerned that if all curriculum processes were open to all faculty, they would not be secure—could people outside the approval chain enter changes? Mayer said the process would be “view only” to non-participants. Switzer asked who received a course approval after a faculty member had submitted it—the chair of the department curriculum committee or the entire committee? Mayer said only the chair of the department curriculum committee could make changes on behalf of that committee. Allen

expressed concern about the finality of the “reject” button and having to start the process all over again. Li suggested an “are you sure” question be interjected prior to someone’s deletion of a proposal.

As a result of the questions posed, Stading said UCC and Maye would address two issues raised by the Senate: making it harder to click the “reject” button by accident and finding a way to work changing/rotating committee members and chairs into the various slots in the flow chart.

Sikka asked if other processes—e.g. travel requests—could be put online as well. Chapman responded that he hoped many procedures would go online; the course approval process was just the starting point. Leave requests are another procedure that could go online. AVP for IT Hossein Shahrokhi said that any procedure that had a clear workflow could, in theory, be handled similarly, assuming this pilot is successful.

### **Honors Program Discussion (Sikka, continued from previous Senate meeting)**

Sikka said she was bringing the Honors Program proposal before the Senate a second time to make sure faculty were on board with its key elements: the global theme, the number of hours inside and outside the discipline, and the separation of classes into honors sections and honors contract courses. She reported the proposal’s current status: awaiting the approval of Senate and word from the Budget Task Force on any proposed modifications. She clarified that the proposal was for an honors program, not an honors college, and invited further questions.

Nowak asked how the 9 hours in the discipline would be managed—would students initiate requests for particular sections or classes to be part of the honors program? Sikka said that if enough qualified students asked for a course, a section could be reserved; otherwise the discipline hours would be contract courses initiated by students and arranged between individual faculty and their chairs, per the Directed Studies policy (with the approval of the honors program).

Schmertz said she thought a section in the honors program proposal on faculty workload was “vague.” She asked for it to be stated more precisely that an honors course would be counted the same way toward the teaching workload as a non-honors course, and suggested that the Directed Studies Policy be referred to directly in a sentence on contract courses. She also did not understand the significance of a sentence that stated that mentoring and recruitment would be part of university service.

Lyons noted the start date for the program was Fall 2012: what factors would dictate whether the program started on the proposed schedule? And how would a program director be chosen over the summer? Would there be an interim person in place while a search was being conducted?

Sikka said this decision would be made outside the scope of the proposal, although the task force had discussed a job description. Provost Chapman said the decision about a program director comes down to budget. The university’s budget must be finalized by April 16.

Preuss asked if the program could be implemented without a budget, since it seemed to be merely a matter of offering particular kinds of courses. Sikka said the budget for next year was \$312,000, and it included the scholarships for the students and some space dedicated to the program. If the university began with contract courses, the expenditures could be gradual. However if a program director were hired for the fall, some of the costs would have to be absorbed over the summer.

Evans moved to support the honors proposal as presented and to place a priority on enacting it consistent with the way it was described in the proposal. The motion carried, 25-0. Chapman praised the efforts of the honors task force, saying they had done an outstanding job of research that went “far beyond expectation.”

### **Discussion on the Common Core**

Lyons said that he thinks there is a lot of “greyness” surrounding how much we revise the core and how we go about revising it. The Coordinating Board has not laid out a process for universities to follow, but it has said that universities should decide for themselves the extent of revisions and the processes used. Some universities in TX are making only minor revisions to their cores to satisfy the new objectives and are not changing the courses offered or how they are distributed across the disciplines.

Committee chairs he has talked to are unclear of their charge. The Oversight task force has put out a request for “Letters of Intent” from faculty by the end of the semester.

There are issues that require broad-based faculty discussion outside of the committees, such as how UHD will use the institutional hours (component area option). For example, how will writing/composition be handled? Are we going to assume these courses will be proposed from all areas? Will the English department be largely responsible for teaching them? How many hours?

He commended the Blackboard Forum as one step toward beginning the necessary conversations.

Farris said it seems like “everything needs to be done first”—decisions made by one committee alter what can be decided by another, and we need a forum larger than the Senate to gain some focus as well as get a sense of the will of the faculty. Faculty must answer questions like SACS requirements for fulltime coverage, course caps, how many hours of writing instruction, and whether they could be satisfied at either freshman or sophomore level. She asked if we needed a faculty assembly.

Sikka mentioned and commended a “W” task force report that committees could look at for best practices for incorporating writing into the curriculum. Allen said he we would resend the report.

Lyons said that THECB viewed Spring 2012 as a “preliminary period” for universities to discuss their goals; this is where we should be. He feels the Letters of Intent being called for by the Core Oversight Committee are premature.

Switzer said her committee wants to know the will of the faculty so it can act accordingly; curriculum should be faculty-driven. Is it too late to call for a faculty assembly? Allen said it would be a matter of finding a time and a room and developing an agenda.

Sikka suggested a format with roundtables and focus groups. She said people are confused about the roles/relationships between the subcommittees and faculty.

Pavelich (who is on the Core Oversight Committee) said his committee was planning on sending out a survey to gauge faculty opinion on the component area option. The survey would offer various choices on how the hours could be used. Hopefully a clear consensus would emerge.

Farris said survey questions can drive answers; she wanted to know who was writing the survey and if faculty could give input into how the survey was constructed.

Moosally said she appreciated the Oversight Committee's efforts to lay out a process but agreed with Lyons that it might be too soon to ask for letters of intent to propose courses. The Oversight committee is supposed to be working with the subcommittees to develop objectives for each component area; these objectives should guide any course being proposed.

Moosally said that faculty needed to be educated about what the questions are before being asked to respond to surveys. Also the subcommittees may have questions for the Oversight committee, particularly after they have engaged with faculty in a more direct way.

Lyons said information sessions would be helpful. Stading asked if we were asking for workshops. Lyons said it would be helpful if the Oversight Committee got a member from the Coordinating Board to meet with faculty.

Preuss said he thought people should communicate with the faculty members on the subcommittee directly, but we should not tell the committees what they should do. He does not want to convey to the faculty on the committees that we don't respect the work they are doing.

Schmertz made a motion that Senate adopt Farris's suggestion of setting aside a Friday in which workshops/roundtables would occur in the morning followed by a faculty assembly in the afternoon.

Evans said she liked the idea of Friday workshops but wondered who would organize them and who was in charge of the overall process.

Sikka says she thinks the role of Senate is to "help guide the process of faculty participation." The ultimate decisions could be made by the subcommittees after considering the recommendations of faculty. She suggested that Allen and Stading decide how to develop a forum allowing for an exchange between faculty and the committees, with the Provost's input.

Lyons agreed that the Oversight committee should develop the forum with Senate's help, and that materials should be disseminated in advance so that faculty could come prepared. He challenged Preuss's concern that Senate was usurping the committees; the intention, he said, was to help facilitate the decisions the committees would make.

Chapman said he thought a workshop would be a "great idea, to disseminate information and clear up confusion." He said he thought the end product would be a core curriculum that was a combination of existing and new courses. He noted that the Coordinating Board has made it clear that it will be looking to see how course learning outcomes line up with core objectives.

Sikka called the question. The motion carried, 21-0.

Chapman announced that President Flores had signed all the Rank and Tenure letters that day. The Board of Regents will act on these at their next meeting. He said it was his first time going through the process and was "blown away" by the quality of the faculty who had come up for tenure/promotion.

Respectfully submitted,  
Johanna Schmertz, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English  
Faculty Senate Secretary