

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

March 6, 2012

Minutes

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

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

Absent: C. Bachman

Announcements from Senate President Austin Allen

Senate is about to start running several elections for positions that expire in May. Faculty volunteers are needed for Academic Affairs Council, Academic Policies Committee, Faculty Affairs Committee, and University Curriculum Committee (Preuss will send the calls). We also need new Senators (Allen is working on the list) and President-Elect and Secretary. He urged Senators to consider running for President-Elect and Secretary.

The Planning and Budget Development Taskforce has been meeting for the last few weeks. Joanna Wolfe has asked for more money for advertising next year. VP Bradley said the Task Force had spent its first two meetings on the current year, looking at new requests. Meetings with students are being held to get their approval for raising fees for advising and the library. The Board of Regents won't review a hike in fees unless we can tell them students support it.

Harned asked how imminent are threats from TX legislature about tying university funds to graduation and retention (performance based funding). Bradley responded he thought it was not a question of taking funds away but of not being eligible for various state "incentive dollars." Whatever the case, recommendations on performance-based funding would go through the Coordinating Board but nothing could happen until they were acted on by legislation. If such legislation occurs, it would include predictive graduation rates based on individual factors particular to each institution (e.g. number of first-generation college students). Harned heard that the UT-El Paso president opposed performance-based funding measures; he does not think they would get passed without a fuss. Bradley noted that UHD has done well in previous sessions because the number of graduates produced (as opposed to 6-year graduation rates) was the key driver. A recent state allocation could not be worked in to UHD budget plan because it was one-time money, but the money went to scholarships.

Evans noted that construction could be affecting enrollment: when will Metro be finished? Bradley said the original projection was January, but he thinks they will be out of our area by Fall semester. We are helping Metro by closing Girard St. over spring break.

Allen noted that an issue of concern to TX universities has to do with faculty workload. Universities are expected to adhere to accountability measures and these may include examining

workload policies and increasing faculty productivity. Chapman has asked faculty to come along to a meeting in Austin so they can hear what gets discussed.

Allen reported that Michael Dressman (Dean of Graduate Studies) has begun work on standardizing admissions scores for graduate programs. The Deans are in early stages of working on this. There are concerns about inadequate input from the departments hosting the degrees, and questions about how graduate programs not owned by departments will be handled. Provost Chapman reiterated that the process is in early stages. He noted that graduate programs are on shaky ground. The Coordinating Board has warned us we need to get more students in. We must be proactive in attracting students.

UH Committee on Intellectual Property

We need to elect a faculty to this System-wide committee. Senate voted unanimously to allow Allen to develop a charge for this committee and make the position part of the regular elections cycle. The election will be handled by the Committee on Committees.

Discussion on Core Curriculum

Allen said that Senate has not had much opportunity to discuss how it will handle the new Core Curriculum. FSEC (Faculty Senate Executive Committee) decided the best place to start is with the institutional option area (the "component area option"). There are 6 hours, 3 of which have been committed to a College Success Program. A question raised is whether we want to start by allotting 3 hours this way from the very beginning, or do we perhaps want to embed college success throughout the core. Maybe we want component committees to lay out what we want the core to look like and see what is missing and consider using the 6 hours that way.

Pavelich (reporting from the Core Oversight Committee) said that the committee had raised the issue of when do we decide how to use the 6 hours? The committee began with the possibility Allen had just mentioned, with the Oversight committee prioritizing decisions on the core curriculum first and later using the 6 institutional hours to fill any gaps. But the committee's more recent thinking is that the committee should start with the 6 hours, so that if these hours go to a particular foundational area, that subcommittee can plan accordingly.

Benavides asked how many hours in the new core are designated to science. Pavelich responded 6. Benavides noted that this presents a problem because the current core has 8 hours for science, allowing for two hours of lab. Can 2 of the six hours allocated to the institutional option (component area option) be used for the lab hours? Pavelich said that this was an example of why the Oversight committee might want to decide the question of the institutional hours up front--so that the relevant committees (in this case science) would know how to adjust their curricula.

Sikka said we should think about the specific areas in which our students are weakest and which they will need after they graduate. For example, she polled her department and they thought their students did not recognize the importance of logic and analytical reasoning to their college courses. We should not rush to commit the six hours, but we don't want to be "paralyzed" by not addressing our students' needs until the end; the processes of designing the core courses and

determining the institutional option should be overlapping, ongoing processes that allow us to cycle back and address in one place what might be missing from the other.

Evans agreed we should identify our students' weaknesses including those students who do not place into developmental classes but still have weaknesses that need to be addressed. She has not heard enough discussion about the knowledge and skills that need to be brought into programs, what students need to be successful in their majors. The committees have a difficult timing question, but we can benefit from discussions like these and from other colleagues at other institutions who are probably engaging in similar struggles.

Schmertz agreed with Evans on the importance of learning what our colleagues at other institutions are doing and says she understands we are making efforts to do so. One of the areas in which we are trying to find out more information has to do with the issue of prerequisites within the core--there is some confusion around whether the core can contain courses with prerequisites, and she thinks the coordinating board is probably going to make some sort of effort to clear up these issues. She said the fact that the coordinating board discussions on the institutional hours are "in flux" is an argument for taking the first path mentioned by Pavelich--pushing discussion of how to use the six institutional hours toward the end of the process, as there is less uncertainty about what needs to happen in the foundational component areas.

Benavides says she is on the History subcommittee (she is in Chemistry). She wants to know if there is representation from each of the relevant disciplines on each subcommittee. Switzer responded that there is some representation, but the chair of each subcommittee is not from one of the relevant disciplines: the committees are multidisciplinary. Harned asked about the structure of the committees: we have a subcommittee called "College Success" (CSP) dedicated to three of the six institutional hours. Is it also responsible for deciding the fate of the remaining three? Speaking from the audience, Birchak (chair of that committee) said that her committee was only charged with three of the six hours.

Farris pointed out that if three of the institutional hours had already been given to this committee, that means that the committee structure has dictated the content of these three hours (that they should go to CSP).

Waller said the committee was in fact called the "Skills for Success" committee. It has met once. One thing that determines how the committee views its task is what happens to composition, which previously had 6 hours in the core. He supports having 6 hours in the core about composition because writing is so fundamental to critical thinking and the other competencies. He wants UHD to decide this issue up front.

Evans said the question of devoting six hours to composition is a good example of asking the colleges what they need their majors to be prepared for. She and colleagues in her department will expect the core to help produce students committed to writing. Dialog about the relationship between the institutional hours and the common core is important.

Waller said he strongly supports the idea of having 3 hours of the core devoted to student success—such a use serves multiple needs and is the sort of "intervention" that is crucial to what progressive universities are doing to improve retention.

Sikka said she thinks a majority favors the importance of writing to the core. She also hears areas of concern on whether three hours for “student success” have to be CSP courses. Could they be high impact, service learning type courses? What we have learned about low-performing students is that they are often so beaten down by experiences of failure that they need an energy "boost." Exciting course content could inspire high level learning while providing a student-centered focus. An example is a geologist who teaches the kind of experiences made available at the 4000 hour level but with the content of a 1000 hour level course.

Pavelich said that the issue of the new core had come up in a "high-impact" way in his morals and ethics course. Is the core there to 1.) Keep people in college and make sure they graduate, 2.) provide students with preliminary grounding in their majors, or 3.) to ensure that even if a student completes only two years, s/he is prepared to be a “decent citizen”? Each of these agendas casts a different light on each of the issues being discussed: extra science labs, extra writing classes, extra college success classes.

Harned said that if three hours are set aside for a college success course, but the course is also intended to be a college level course, who will teach it? Waller said this question arose in his committee. Birchak said the Skills for Success committee had discussed a few things: a model at UT which has a thematic focus linked to different disciplines, as well as a learning frameworks model. The committee is developing learning outcomes to go out in their call to the colleges. They discussed that these courses should contain certain elements like academic behaviors and learning strategies, but these can be framed in a large number of disciplines. All the TX universities got together to talk about this option one night at a national first-year experience conference; they are part of a listserv. Birchak said she could forward notes of all meetings of the Skills for Success committee; the minutes have already been sent to the Oversight Task Force but she can send them to Senate as well, so that UHD can keep up with the committee’s deliberations as they emerge.

Lyons said minutes and notes would be important, the importance of the present discussion is that we are having an open forum. He would also like the work of the Oversight Task Force to be as open and transparent as possible. They can meet outside the public eye but need to share their work. He is not sure whether or not dedicating 3 hours to CSP is right approach, but wants the decision to be made via a straightforward process which allows periodic input from faculty.

Farris thinks that the existing CSP courses operate under a “deficit model.” Even students taking these course know it is a deficit model and resent it. The courses are not our "best moment." If this course is required of all students, we will need to tear it down and rebuild it. She likes the idea of a college success course serving as an intellectual "jumpstart," perhaps a freshman seminar like what Sikka described that introduces students to intellectual work of the academy. Such an approach will need multiple sections. It can't be taught by part-timers or advisors. We have not historically been willing to pony up the resources for college success courses but will need to if we require this of all students. Sikka added that she had heard an ex-university

president at a high impact conference talk about how faculty with strong research interests whose upper-level classes were not making could bring their upper-level pedagogies down, which reallocates faculty resources while meeting needs of students.

Pavelich told Senate to be on the lookout for a Blackboard course that will allow faculty to be informed about and comment on the work of the Oversight committee.

Schmertz said she was concerned that using Blackboard might not be an effective way of communicating committee work to faculty. This method can be ineffective when faculty don't check into the Blackboard sites and when the sites are not updated. She said she would prefer that the oversight committee and all the subcommittees distribute minutes to all faculty. She moved that "the Oversight committee and the core subcommittees maintain and distribute minutes of their meetings to all UHD faculty." Farris seconded. Allen restated the motion and noted that it would be a recommendation.

Pavelich said he could imagine deleting ten emails every week with this plan. Preuss said that since emails come and go, the minutes need to be "warehoused." Switzer said that the Blackboard site was intended to serve this purpose, and would be accessible to staff and SGA as well. She asked Stading if he had mentioned uploading the minutes to the Blackboard site. Stading said the task force had voted to send the minutes to everyone Schmertz had mentioned, but that he had not done so yet.

Schmertz clarified that she had asked Stading previously if the minutes could be sent to the Senate President, Provost, and department chairs but was now proposing a more widespread distribution which would presumably hit all the parties previously mentioned. Li noted that Blackboard can serve as a repository, but there still need to be emails sent notifying faculty when there is new material. Kintzele said transparency is important and that as a member of one of the subcommittees he does not want to get into a situation where what the committee has accomplished has to be redone later because it has come up against problems with the larger faculty that his committee members had not foreseen. He favored both sending the minutes and maintaining the Blackboard site. Preuss said if you sign onto the Blackboard site, it will send out immediate email updates. Lyons said the extra emails should not be an issue, and people who are invested in the issue will take the additional step of visiting Blackboard. He argued for both modes of communication.

Waller argued in favor of what Farris had referred to as the "deficit model." Students do not pass the core. In 5 semesters, 1/2 will complete freshman year English. Less than half will pass political science and 1/3 will finish the history requirement. Fewer than 1/4 of our students will finish the core in five long semesters. The strategic plan calls for 40% of UHD students to graduate in six years, and this won't happen if students don't pass the core at a better rate. Why is it "a crime" to require students to take a course that will support and help them where they need help? A CSP course can address freshman skills or freshman experiences. He likes the idea of a freshman experience being a professional experience course. But we may need another way to create a freshman experience other than these 3 hours.

Allen noted that Waller was out of order because there was a motion on the table, but that he hoped the minutes would reflect Waller's remarks. Evans called the question. The motion carried (not sure of count).

Anjoo Sikka: Proposal to Establish an Honors Program at UHD

In July the Strategic Planning Committee discussed the need for incentives for higher performing students so that they don't leave because we don't have the right majors or enough advanced level coursework. A task force was appointed consisting of Carolyn Ashe, Ermalinda DelaVina, Yvonne Kendall, Aaron Gillette, and Jerry Johnson. Committee members visited honors programs and analyzed data from university websites. They looked at 17 guidelines from the National Collegiate Honors Council and developed a set of questions from it which they used to examine 10 schools: University of Houston, Texas Southern University, Xavier University, University of North Texas, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Lamar University, Penn State-Erie, Virginia Commonwealth University, Bloomberg University-Pennsylvania, and Prairie View University.

The proposed goal for the Honors program is "Informed Global Citizenship." The committee came up with a "hybrid" program containing 18 hours of honors courses. Not more than 9 hours should be honors "contract" courses, which would be approved by the honors program director and program chair. The program would be administratively centralized, with a fulltime program director who does marketing, fundraising, interacting with faculty, families and students, and assessment. The committee also proposed the need for a fulltime administrative assistant and an assistant director to provide as backup. There should also be space for the Program Director's Office and a lounge where students interact with each other and faculty mentors.

The proposed entrance requirement is 3.25 for freshman and sophomores and 3.5 for juniors/seniors. Students will need to maintain at least a 3.0 every semester to continue and must have a minimum 3.0 GPA to graduate with honors. The program will plan social events and conferences so that students have a sense of community that includes their family. Members of the committee went to a UH Honors reception and talked to family members who were very proud of what students were experiencing through the UH Honors program. The program would conduct regular assessment of its courses and do self-studies every five years.

The committee has submitted a budget to Provost Chapman, who will submit it (possibly with revisions) to the Planning and Development Budget Taskforce. The Honors Program task force is currently looking for support from Senate. They are looking at Fall 2012 for implementation, but concern has been expressed that this might be too aggressive a timeline.

Evans applauded the plan --it will benefit all colleges. She asked what the committee projects in terms of number of students. Sikka said 40 would be admitted in fall, and 40 more in spring, and not just at the freshman level. The scholarship support being proposed is 50% tuition and fees (this standard practice in the programs they studied). Harned asked about the budget. Sikka said the cost would be \$312,240 for the upcoming year. The program needs staff support from the outset to succeed; a staffed office is important to maintaining student interest through interactions with faculty mentors and occasionally with the program director.

Harned said he was concerned about scheduling. If there is a limited number of students, how does the program make sure the courses are offered to match the times that students need? Sikka said "contract courses" would help. She recommended that faculty who have questions send them to her or a committee member and said the committee was also thinking about setting up a Blackboard site. She will also send out a call for proposals to department curriculum committees.

Interim Report from Teaching Excellence Task Force (Leigh Van Horn, chair)

The Teaching Excellence Task force was charged by Senate to investigate best practices and successful models for faculty development for teaching excellence, including comprehensive Teaching and Learning Centers, and make recommendations to Faculty Senate. Van Horn requested that Senate feedback to the committee's report be incorporated into the Senate minutes, which the committee will then review.

The committee divided its work into three groups: 1.) researching models for faculty development, 2.) examining successful Teaching Excellence centers, and 3.) looking at models of teaching excellence currently existing at UHD.

Teacher development should be faculty-driven and needs to be discipline-specific. The committee wants to learn from the faculty what the goals of a teaching development program should be, what teaching/learning issues faculty would like to explore with colleagues, and what type of structure faculty would prefer for these explorations (e.g. consultant, committee, staffed program or combination).

The committee chose 5 schools that represented the best of what is being done at urban, commuter colleges like our own: Austin Peay, Cal State-Bernardino, University of Central Oklahoma, UT-Brownsville, and William Paterson University. Van Horn's handout included links to these programs. Common elements were the following basic elements: staff, physical location, workshops and brownbag programs on classroom practices and technology, and an online collection of materials on good teaching practices. Best programs include all of the above, plus grants, an excellent web presence, current calendars, programs for new faculty, symposia on pedagogy targeted toward their unique student population, incentives to study and publish on interdisciplinary pedagogy, peer observation, and resources for adjuncts and lecturers.

The next step is for committee members to contact representatives at these 5 universities. They will also examine the grant funding available to these universities (e.g. the Department of Education) and what objectives these grants measure.

The committee proposed to examine the faculty response to the High Impact Practices survey in order to make best use of best practices currently in use at UHD. Such an examination would identify practices that could be refined, clarified, promoted in workshops and extended within and across disciplines.

After this examination, they propose faculty focus groups to help the committee direct the next steps.

Wang wanted to know if the task force's work could include some sort of advising or counseling that would help teachers deal with issues as they arise in the classroom. Van Horn said that some teaching centers have this; if UHD faculty decide this is important, the task force will work toward this.

Lyons asked about timeframe for implementing a teaching center. Van Horn said she would like a center but a center is not the only way to develop teaching excellence; we need to hear from faculty about what they want.

Schmertz asked if the high-impact data would be the only thing the committee would examine to find good teaching practice at UHD. Van Horn said focus groups would also help the committee identify these in an informal, conversational way; committee members Morgan and Roundtree have volunteered to set these up.

Preuss wanted to know what the committee's recommendations were. Van Horn said the committee was not sure how far Senate wanted the task force to go, but that they would take it as far as they could by the end of May.

Sikka said that evidence of best teaching practices should also come from students at UHD. Van Horn agreed and said that the high-impact survey had not been administered to students yet, so perhaps the focus groups she had mentioned should include students.

Evans commended the committee on their work and suggested the honors task force provided an example of how far a task force could go in making recommendations. Van Horn said it was exciting that the honors task force had made recommendations to the provost to locate grants and funding and said she hoped the teaching task force could follow suit.

Benavides asked how the committee planned to explore funding sources to fund a teaching center. Van Horn noted that all funding opportunities have ties and obligations. Sikka mentioned a challenge grant of \$200,000 from Houston Endowment. Can some of it be used to recognize good teaching? Evans says she was not sure if UHD had actually received this grant. Sikka said the Houston Endowment report should state who the funding comes from and what kinds of awards are available for what kinds of faculty innovations.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Johanna Schmertz, Ph.D.
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Faculty Senate Secretary