

UHD FACULTY SENATE MEETING
February 5, 2008

CALLED TO ORDER: The tenth UHD Faculty Senate meeting of the 2007-8 academic year was held in C-100, 1001 Commerce Street, Houston, Texas on February 5, 2008. The meeting convened at 2:35 pm. President Anjoo Sikka presiding, with Vice-President Michelle Moosally.

Present: Anjoo Sikka (President), Michelle Moosally (Vice President), Austin Allen (SOS), David Branham (SOS), John Capeheart (NS), Youn-Sha Chan (CMS), Tony Chiaviello (ENG), Raquel Chiquillo (A&H), Byron Christmas (NS), Merrilee Cunningham (ENG), Ermelinda DeLaVina (CMS), Joyce Dutcher (UE), Susan Henney (SOS), Ann Kane (SOS), Steve Maranville (MMBA), Kat McClellan (ENG), Rich McMahon (FACIS), Pat Mosier (A&H), Angela Pedrana (UE), Kim Pinkerton (UE), Lucille Pointer (MMBA), Nick Rangel (A & H), Ruth Robbins (FACIS), Larry Spears (NS), Cindy Stewart (SOS), Jorge Tito-Izquierdo (ET), Jeong-Mi Yoon (CMS), Zehai Zhou (FACIS)

Absent: Gene Preuss (Secretary-Treasurer), Jeffrey Adams (MMBA), Aimee Roundtree (ENG), Shengli Yuan (CMS), Lance Hignite (CJ)

Guests: **Vice-President of Academic Affairs & Provost Woods**, Associate Vice-President David Fairbanks, and Vice President of Administration and Finance David Bradley

President Sikka declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 2:35 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Sikka announced the minutes from January 22, 2008 in the absence of Secretary Preuss and opened the session for discussion. Referring to minutes sent out by Secretary Preuss, Woods said that online classes are actually increasing and that ITV classes are decreasing. Evans said that we need to compare Fall to Fall and Spring to Spring in terms of claiming increases or decreases with online courses. Sikka said that because the minutes reflect what was said at the meeting, we would take the comments to Secretary Preuss to allow him to respond.

Cunningham moved to defer approval of minutes until the next meeting with Austin Allen seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports from Officers

Sikka announced that, although we are excited about the new grievance and ombuds policies and look forward to reviewing them, the recent SACS issues have derailed that focus; we need to prepare for a second monitoring report by September. That report will be the final monitoring report before SACS decides whether we've adequately addressed compliance issues from their visit in 2006. In September, there are three possible actions SACS could take: 1) endorsement of our viability and response, 2) academic probation, or 3) removal from membership. Sikka noted that, from her understanding, removal is unlikely to occur before a stage of probation.

Sikka reported emails from Senate officers and other faculty concerned about the gravity of our position with SACS. Sikka stated that now is not the time for dejection or complacency; we

need concerted action and we all need to dive right in and address the concerns raised by SACS. She pointed to resources that are available, including two particularly useful websites at UT-Arlington (who recently underwent reaccreditation) and UT-Dallas (currently undergoing reaccreditation) which has an excellent assessment workbook. She said that she was surprised that they all focused on capacity-building as have we and they have experienced the same kinds of frustration about how best to approach assessment; however, they have also created resources, which we need to do.

Sikka said that success will require commitment of resources; faculty are already carrying full loads. Just asking people to do more will work, but might lead to burned out faculty and staff. We need to think about resource allocations—what can we take on and what can we put aside. She also pointed out that UH is currently going through reaccreditation; they would be jolted by our potential probation because of confusion in the community about UH and UHD and we need to be cognizant the impact on our sister university.

Sikka announced that she had forwarded the action plan that Dr. Woods and Dr. Fairbanks sent to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee; the action plan incorporates some elements of the senate resolution. She recommended that the Senate start discussions with the resolution sent out with the agenda and use that to determine a response to the action plan

Sikka concluded her remarks by welcoming everyone to the Commerce Street Building and announcing that UFEC will meet with the Chancellor on Friday, though there is no fixed agenda, and that UPC has met only once this semester and Academic Affairs Council has not yet been called.

Vice-President Moosally had no report.

Reports from Administration

Woods announced that Chancellor Khator was on campus last week, her visit orchestrated based on what she said she wanted to see on her first visit. She noted that the Chancellor appreciated opportunities to see the facilities at One Main, Academic, Student Life, Shea Street, and Commerce Street buildings because in her mind we were a “center,” a single building. Woods reported that Khator was complimentary about the people she met and sees this as the first of several trips; she also expressed interest to Dr. Sikka that she would like to be invited to a Senate meeting. Woods reported meeting Khator’s right-hand person who she quoted as saying that Dr. Khator was “bubbling with excitement.”

Woods reported that she had asked Deans to send a message to faculty to take mandatory training seriously. She was concerned that UHD was the bottom of the list in compliance prior to today; she really appreciated everyone’s efforts when the final result was announced at the Board of Regents meeting in which UHD was second behind UHV with 88% compliance. Other campuses were 89%, 83% and 87%. She thanked everyone for their efforts.

Woods said that the Chancellor has signed the Voluntary System of Accountability agreement on behalf of the UH-system. Dr. Woods said that we would be given more information as it becomes available. It is an accountability system that many universities are signing. The four

schools in the system will approach accountability differently; we have some flexibility. She pointed out that UHV and UHCL will have different strategies because they are upper-division only. The system measures the success of your students and what they are learning.

Woods announced that four new regents were sworn in today: 3 ladies and one gentleman. She indicated that, for the first time, there will not be a regent from the Victoria area. She also noted that the Chancellor's 100-day campaign is making a big splash; the Chancellor is encouraging the community to help her and her team determine direction. Woods observed that the Chancellor is a good speaker and a "vibrant cheerleader" which will serve all of us well.

Woods said we have no pending issues at the Coordinating Board.

Robbins asked whether the BOR objections to the MBA program might be altered by the new membership. Woods said that the Chancellor saw that we have rooms to accommodate an MBA program at the Shea Street Building.

Woods concluded her remarks by saying that UHD has not given up on the MBA.

Sikka noted that the Senate would like to hear from Dr. Woods about the context of the SACS imperative and her vision for action between now and September 5 before the Senate opens discussion. She requested that Dr. Woods speak to this.

Woods started by saying that they have been wandering through the SACS letters because they are not making a lot of sense compared with past information. She reported that much work has been done in terms of assessment. So, if we go back by department to look at what we had in place when the visiting team was here, we're being asked to complete that. Several departments have continued to work more aggressively on that task than others; she reported that she is unable to give names of departments in either case, but we can look at the website to find the missing pieces.

Woods said that we have not looked as seriously as we should have at assessment of general education. One option is to use standardized general education tests; several groups have been talking about this over the last year, but we don't have an assessment tool to launch. She said people were looking for a standardized test such as other schools use, but noted that we are not required to test all of our seniors. The test involves testing knowledge of what they have learned in terms of gen ed. Woods said that we know up front that many of our graduates did not start with us and took their core somewhere else, but they would be included in the testing because they are our graduates. She said that SACS wants us to administer the exam, get results and have an opportunity for a group to look at the results and address areas where our seniors have not demonstrated success. Woods then announced that the General Education Advisory Committee will have looked at results of our standardized test by the end of the semester so that they can make recommendations

Woods said that when we got the letter, there was mention that it would have been nice to see notes or minutes of meetings, but she said that departments don't often keep "notes" when they get together and assign responsibilities. She said that she herself keeps notes of the 3 weekly

meetings that they have been having about SACS for awhile and that she would also make a note that we discussed assessment today at the Senate. Woods suggested that we don't need excessive detail but we do need a paper trail.

Woods said that she has a major concern about the letters; she is a person from "the old school," in which you start under a catalog and your progress is judged by that catalog. If a program becomes more stringent when you're a junior, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to go with the new requirement. She is disappointed by her sense that SACS doesn't seem to feel that way. She remembers when they changed their way of doing things; people who were almost finished were allowed to choose to stay with the old system. She said that Education at our institution does not enjoy the option of staying with the old system; TEA changes ground rules for education programs. SACS is a different situation.

Woods reported that we were through with first section of the SACS review on university effectiveness and the visiting team said that we were okay; then, we got a letter saying what we needed to do in our next report and she took that seriously. We didn't know that standards would be edited five days later to combine two sections, which meant that effectiveness was opened up again. An individual with SACS told us that they're not bound by the group that looked at us earlier. We didn't send everything we had sent before because we had no reason to assume they wouldn't have access to it. Woods said that this time, we will send "a Mack truck full of stuff." She asserted that it will take everybody in the room in their respective departments to make this happen but she is confident that it is doable, but in some areas we'll need to provide assistance. She also reported that a letter from Dr. Castillo would go to Dr. Wheelen at SACS letting her know our concerns

Sikka asked whether we've heard anything definitive from SACS in terms of what they are looking for and asked whether we have written a letter of protest. Woods said she hadn't seen the letter and asked whether anyone else in the room had (and none had); she continued by saying that the conversation with SACS is not over and that Fairbanks is the official spokesperson for UHD with SACS.

Sikka said that it is important for us to know definitively why we are in this position. Colleagues want to know what SACS wants other than what seems to be clear in the letter, so that we can start understanding what we need to do and actually doing the work.

Woods said that regardless of what the letter looks like, we would be naïve to expect less than the completion of what we started with when the visiting team was here. And second, we need to do assessment of seniors and their capabilities in general education. She then said that we don't know how much of what we've already done we need to provide. She didn't think the recent review team had seen earlier materials. The monitoring report did not include history because no one indicated that we needed to send anything other than the monitoring report and the gears have been changed. She believes we will need to build our case all over again, thought the documents are there; we just need to ship them off and inundate people with paper. They will have to tell us if they need anything else.

Sikka asked if the editing of standards was done last year (2007). Woods answered in the affirmative but said that they didn't know that.

Sikka said that the standards changed in terms of organization, but felt that the deficiencies are the same; they are not new. Woods said that institutional effectiveness was opened again. Sikka replied that the focus is still the assessment portion—assessment based decision and an institutional culture of assessment. Woods disagreed, saying they had opened up effectiveness again. Sikka said that recommendation is about assessment and not about other aspects of effectiveness based on the content in the letter. Woods said that a combined section opens the door for additional review.

Moosally asked how we intend to find out what SACS wants if it's not in the letter, wondering whether there would be a conference call.

Fairbanks said that we know exactly what SACS wants and it's in the letter and we have known for 4 or 5 years. The standards are substantively the same. The confusion has been about the history of the standard you're out of compliance with. He offered the following information: Originally, the assessment component 3.4.1 was housed under educational program standards and section 3.3.1 was for more general institutional effectiveness emphasizing a system-wide process. Our original compliance report had laid out UHD's system of degree objectives for every program with tables, showing we had a system in place. Key initial problems cited by SACS were that degree programs were relying too heavily on course completion as a measure and that a lot of departments hadn't done much assessment or offered much data. Fairbanks said he (and others) thought that the first monitoring report was supposed to "fill in the gaps" of the primary report, but that the SACS committee didn't find the relevant parts of the original report because the parts were not in the expected places within the new numbering system. He went on to say that expectations have not changed at all: we should articulate what skills graduates should achieve, results of assessment should be gathered, and we should show that we do something about our programs with those results. Fairbanks concluded by saying that minutes are needed to reflect data-driven decisions; they should not just be a list of assessment results and a record of actions taken -- they should offer a culture of evidence that actions were the result of careful review and analysis.

Sikka asked that Senators have an opportunity to ask questions before moving on to the resolution.

McClellan asked for clarification of references to prior standards that appear different than current ones. Sikka said that the content is the same but it is organized differently; assessment has been housed under a larger standard, potentially opening the door to a broader issue but the focus of concerns seems to be the same. Woods said that they didn't realize that we needed to address 3.3.1 and repeat our earlier elements to them.

Rangel noted Woods' reference to a "Mack truck" full of materials and asked whether any portion of it is confidential; if not, why not make it public? Fairbanks said that it is up on the UHD SACS website, including the 2006 assessment reports. Fairbanks also noted that SACS requests that rather than sending web links, we send DVDs with all data.

Christmas asked whether the letter from the President was to protest the “moving target.” Fairbanks said it would express surprise and concern that we hadn’t received better communication. Christmas asked whether any other institutions are experiencing similar misunderstandings. Fairbanks said that SACS “horror stories” are not uncommon. Woods said that certainly people at SACS knew about the changes they intended to make but we weren’t told. Sikka noted that we ask our students to keep up to date with information, so the irony of our position with SACS is quite striking. Evans said that SACS did not even tell us to look at the website. Sikka responded that she didn’t think that position should be our foremost response.

Cunningham asked whether SACS wanted a baseline of freshman data when we assess capabilities of our seniors. Fairbanks said standard 3.5.1 is now asking us to offer evidence demonstrating the extent to which our seniors have achieved general education objectives. Moosally pointed out that the most recent letter requests evidence that our seniors have actually achieved those objectives, which is different. Fairbanks and Evans responded that the January 2008 letter is outdated – the standards on the SACS website have changed and that Dr. Castillo’s letter is an attempt to find out what we are supposed to follow. Moosally queried whether the unsent letter was our primary mechanism for finding out what SACS wants, and if so, whether we had any idea of a timeline on a response, given that the general education committee needed to begin work. Fairbanks responded that

Allen noted that questions about wording of letters and standards seem to be a legal question, and we need to be more concerned about what we can have an impact on. Specifically, he questioned what we are doing to address the 3.3.1 need for the “systematic process or comprehensive institution-wide agenda” required by SACS. To his query “shouldn’t we have a policy to establish that”, there was no response. Sikka noted that it undoubtedly wasn’t intended as a rhetorical question and we needed to consider it in the resolution.

Robbins asked how a department could know whether the work they’ve done was adequate, allowing the department to move on to the next steps. Fairbanks said that every degree program is supposed to have a minimum of three outcome goal and measures, at least one of which must be indirect. Sikka asked how departments are supposed to be aware of that requirement. Fairbanks said that the issue of direct and indirect measures just came up in this letter and that it is not new information and has been requested. Sikka said that she was on the SACS steering committee and it was news to her, so perhaps we are not doing as good a job of communicating these expectations as we could be.

DeLaVina asked whether anyone had answered Robbins’ question about how departments get feedback. She had understood that under the new plan, Deans are supposed to meet with program coordinators. Woods told Robbins that her Dean is talking with Fairbanks. Fairbanks said the material that was just circulated is a summary of what we’ve told SACS, claiming Deans would be responsible for working with departments. Not much is new; they’ve just offered a reminder to people.

Harned pointed out that we had thus far been focused on seeing that programs have learning outcomes and that we measure whether students achieve them, but asked what we are doing about the next phase of reviewing assessment results and planning for remediation of programs

and their assessment techniques. He wondered how far SACS wants us to go by September in completing the full cycle. Fairbanks said that we should have results; we should have them by now and should have a process in place; it is a continuous process. Fairbanks reported that this was also true 12 years ago and that the unit planning process is our institutional effectiveness plan, using outcomes to plan for the future. Harned again asked whether we know what SACS wants by September. Fairbanks said that we already have some data but it is expected that we will “close the gaps.” He said we need to do an audit right now to see where we are. Woods said that the assessment Harned referred to is supposed to become part of what we do on a regular basis; we don’t have to assess all objectives every year—we can pick one at a time—but SACS expects this to become a way of life.

Cunningham asked whether it is true that perhaps part of SACS’ disappointment is that we are working on assessment, but they expected us to be past that and were instead considering results and making changes. Woods said she doesn’t think SACS expects we have gone through the full process with all objectives, but we aren’t effectively documenting these activities. Cunningham asked whether we can actually claim that remedial steps have been taken to close the gaps

Moosally moved to close discussion and look at the resolution. Motion passed.

Sikka reported that the resolution was the result of work done by FSEC last Tuesday, prior to availability of the action plan from Drs. Woods and Fairbanks. She suggested that we focus on the “be it resolved” statements and take them point by point. The resolution was read aloud and we started with point (a).

DeLaVina questioned whether we were ignoring the action plan, since that did address some of the resolution points, in order to focus on the resolution. Sikka suggested that we focus on the resolution, even though the action plan addressed some of these issues. We can then edit the action plan to reflect the resolution and send out feedback to Drs. Fairbanks and Woods. Pointer said she didn’t understand why we needed to request appointment of the Academic Assessment Committee because she assumed it had been appointed. Woods said that the committee had not been constituted this year and has undergone several configurations over the years. *Point (a) was unanimously approved.*

Henney questioned which assessment activities were addressed in point (b), given that there are different levels of assessments which are not being discussed. Capeheart said that faculty are involved in all assessment and that should be the focus. Spears suggested additional language to specify “academic program assessment activities.” Allen suggested addition of reference to general education core assessment also, as it is critically important. *Point (b) was amended and approved as follows: Direct Faculty involvement in academic program assessment activities and general education assessment.*

Moosally proposed two additions to point (c): (i) handbook of assessment and (ii) a policy establishing a review cycle of 6 years and a timeline. Robbins pointed out that we wouldn’t have time to complete that by September. Sikka said that in addition to the three steps of program assessment, SACS also expects us to show an institutional culture that is supportive of assessment and assessment-based decisions and we need to think about a policy for reference by

chairs and deans, rather than making it part of our folklore. Moosally pointed out that such elements in the action plan strengthen our case for long-term institutionalization of assessment. Branham asked why the 6 year time frame. Sikka said that other institutions seem to use 6-8 year cycles. Fairbanks said that the 6-year time frame made sense because each program will have 3 objectives and must conduct assessment of each one at least once every three years. Robbins asked how point (c) is different from point (d). Moosally said that a policy and a process are distinct; the policy might point to process, but a process determines who is involved and how the policy is carried out. Mosier raised the point that the charge from SACS might also be aimed at assessment in decision-making in support departments as well as academic programs. Fairbanks confirmed that Mosier is correct. Mosier then noted that point (d) is broader than just academic programs and could therefore address the broader SACS mandate for institutional assessment. Dutcher asked whether we should be looking at instructor assessment rather than exclusively student evaluations. Robbins noted that we have a lot to do before September and wondered whether committees would get involved; Sikka suggested that the Curriculum Committee be tasked with developing a policy. Moosally repeated Woods' point that SACS expects this to become our way life and therefore not everything needed to be completed by September and we should in fact be considering long-range goals in the action plan. *Point (c) was passed as amended:*

- a. *Mechanisms for facilitating assessment-based program decisions in each department, including:*
 - i. *a handbook of assessment*
 - ii. *a policy that incorporates 6-year program review cycle under the leadership of the Provost and establishes timeline for assessment activities*

Pointer asked whether the resolution was referring to a university-wide program of assessment in point (d) and if so, wasn't that accomplished in point (c). Sikka pointed out the distinction between policy and process, which could establish who looks at data, who's responsible for reporting, etc. Branham advocated leaving point (d) as is, citing a difference between policy and process and noting that the two points are not contradictory. *Point (d) was passed in its original form.*

Robbins asked whom the reports in point (e) are directed to. Sikka noted that the content of the last SACS monitoring report was not known to many and that we should know what is going in our next report and we should be aware of what's going on with other programs, because success of the institution is dependent on the success of all programs. Rangel suggested that the September 2008 deadline is too limiting; he advocated a change of language to say "through the reaccreditation process." *Point (e) was approved as amended: Regular progress reporting to various bodies in the UHD community throughout the reaccreditation process.*

Robbins asked whether point (f) implied that we would be working through the summer. Sikka indicated that FSEC can work in the summer in the absence of the full Senate. Spears said that the report should be made available to the Faculty Senate. Cunningham advocated a specific date. *Point (f) was approved as amended: Participation and contributions of multiple parties, including faculty, to the final report due to SACS on September 5, 2008, with drafts available to the Faculty Senate by August 5, 2008.*

Points (g), (h), and (i) were all passed in their original form:

- g. Specific dates for deliverables*
- h. Specified responsible parties*
- i. Indication of what SACS recommendation elements are addressed by each action step*

Branham moved to vote on the entire resolution and was seconded by Allen. Moosally stated that the institution should make a financial commitment to a successful assessment program, and proposed an addition to the resolution calling for UHD to hire an external expert consultant to assist us in our bid for reaccreditation and also to offer compensation in the form of overload pay or course releases through fall semester to the faculty who would be taking on significant, large burdens associated with compiling data for the SACS report within a short time frame. Branham pointed out that SACS also expects to see that institutions have committed resources to ongoing assessment initiatives. Shahrokhi suggested that compensation for staff also be added. Moosally moved to suspend the vote on the resolution in order to consider the amendment, Allen seconded it, and it passed. The resolution was amended by addition of point (j): *j. Allotment of resources to hire an external academic assessment consultant and course releases or compensation to faculty and staff.*

Mosier asked where we are with the Director of Assessment position. Sikka said we met with Fairbanks two weeks ago and worked on some issues; we sent our comments and are waiting to hear the status of the job search. Robbins said that we should still hire a consultant to overlap with the Director of Assessment.

The entire resolution on the SACS plan of action was approved as amended with 22 in favor and 1 abstention.

Branham proposed that the Senate consider appointment of an ad hoc Senate committee to offer status reports of each program's assessment strategies and progress because the whole university is vulnerable if even one program isn't in compliance. Sikka said that the proposal will be distributed for consideration at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15pm.

The final version of the resolution is attached to these minutes.

Respectfully submitted by
Michelle Moosally

Date of Approval

**Secretary/Treasurer
UHD Faculty Senate**

Resolution on SACS Plan of Action

Approved by the UHD Faculty Senate
By the UHD Faculty Senate Executive Committee
February 5, 2008
(22 in favor, 1 abstention)

Whereas:

- Reaccreditation by SACS is critical to the existence of our institution and specifically to the careers of our faculty and education of our students,
- Existing processes for satisfying SACS recommendations have proven insufficient, and
- The time frame for gathering, assessing, and reporting on significant amounts of data is short

Be it resolved that:

The UHD Faculty Senate requests that UHD administrative leadership deliver an action plan to the UHD community to address the SACS recommendations in the letters of January 9, 2007 and January 9, 2008. The action plan should include the following elements and be made available by February 15, 2008:

- b. Appointment and convening of the UHD Academic Assessment Committee by February 15, 2008.
- c. Direct Faculty involvement in academic program assessment activities and general education assessment.
- d. Mechanisms for facilitating program-based assessment decisions in each department, including:
 - i. a handbook of assessment
 - ii. a policy that incorporates 6-year program review cycle under the leadership of the Provost and establishes timeline for assessment activities
- e. A process for creating an institution-wide agenda for ongoing assessment and assessment-based decisions
- f. Regular progress reporting to various bodies in the UHD community through September 2008
- g. Participation and contributions of multiple parties, including faculty, to the final report due to SACS on September 5, 2008, with drafts available to the Faculty Senate by August 5, 2008.
- h. Specific dates for deliverables
- i. Specified responsible parties
- j. Indication of what SACS recommendation elements are addressed by each action step
- k. Allotment of resources to hire an external academic assessment consultant and course releases or compensation to faculty and staff