

Faculty Senate Minutes

23 September 2011 meeting

President Gary Byrd called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. in 11 JBK.

Senators in attendance: Alex, Ambrose, Anwar, Bigham, Byrd, Crandall, Drumheller, Jafar, Johnson, Kuennen, Landram, Loftin, Parr-Scanlin, Pendleton, Rausch, Vizzini

Substitutes: Melodie Frick for Castillo, Karyn Friske for Rosa, Monica Hart for Severn

Senators absent: Bartlett, Ward, Wilson

Dr. O'Brien welcomed the Faculty Senators to the Fall semester.

Gary Byrd sent 10 questions provided by Faculty Senators to Dr. O'Brien earlier in the week.

Q.1. Because of recently started Ad Hoc Exigency Committee work, Program Review Committee, and other evaluations for cuts that are aimed at saving money, scarce resources, and University time, can you share with the Senate your priorities for short-term and long-term changes?

Q.2. Could you tell us what in your mind are the most important items that the Program Review Committee should be addressing?

A. Dr. O'Brien explained the >\$5 million state cuts to the WT budget during the past biennium, and said incentive funds, need-based scholarships, and special items had decreased. WT started saving reserves 3 years ago. Pay raises for WT personnel this year came from a slight increase in student credit hours.

Dr. O'Brien asked the Program Review Committee to suggest where cuts might be made but determine what effects changes might have on student learning, the primary mission of WT. Process analysis will be done. The long-term goal of WT is to increase enrollment, increase retention and the proportion of students graduating on time, and enhance the quality of WT. The Board of Regents might not allow tuition increases. Increasing student retention 5% would provide \$150,000 per year. Dr. O'Brien reminded Senate that much education occurs outside the classroom to give WT students an edge, so what would be lost or gained from programs must be considered. Dr. O'Brien will make the final decisions, but he said there are no "sacred cows."

Q.3. Related to Program Review Committee, how can we build a bridge of communication between the Senate and that committee?

A. By design, most members of the Program Review Committee are faculty, and hopefully the faculty representatives will report back to their respective Colleges. Gary Byrd represents and will keep Faculty Senate informed. Dr. O'Brien said that before any final decisions are made, the constituent group(s) affected will be informed.

Q.4. This year's Senate is going to work on its own cost analysis of University areas (e.g., academics, administration, athletics, etc.). We wish to work with you on this

endeavor. What important perspectives would you suggest as we begin this examination? Why have administrative costs seemed to have increased at such a fast pace comparatively to many other areas of the University?

A. Dr. O'Brien hopes Faculty Senate will take advantage of processes being developed by the Program Review Committee and not duplicate what is being done. WT needs to build data bases and has not been as data-driven as needed because of using Datatel, unlike the rest of the TAMU System.

Dr. O'Brien said administrative costs have increased at a faster rate than for full-time faculty and other areas because WT administration was underfunded compared to other universities in the state. When he came to WT, the tuition rate was among the lowest in the state, the WT Foundation was too small, and college administrative offices and the offices of Admissions, Communications/Marketing, Development, Financial Aid, and Scholarships were underfunded and understaffed. In 2006, salaries for WT faculty ranked 32 of 34 universities in the state. Class sizes and course loads were comparable among universities, but WT faculty were underpaid. Staff salaries were 20-30% below the local market. WT now has Associate Deans because Dr. O'Brien believes College Deans should be obtaining resources from the community, not serving on numerous committees and doing graduation credit checks. Learning assessment coordination was added because of the need for outcome assessments for SACS. Information submitted to SACS needed WT to hire personnel and better fund first-year students' experiences, study abroad, nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships, and student success, much of which is funded from student service fees. The Office of Risk Management was added after events at Virginia Tech and mandates from the State. WT faculty have increased by a net of 11. The budget for part-time instructors increased \$400,000.

Q.5. The University has made progress in recycling paper, bottles, and cans. What are your thoughts pertaining to curbing unnecessary printing of paper throughout the University (e.g., attendance records, procurement card transactions, travel, student HELC printing, business office)?

A. Dr. O'Brien wants appropriate changes made to processes to use more technology and save time and paper.

Q.6. Are you interested in streamlining and making more efficient the recruiting and hiring processes for part-time and full-time academic positions? If so, what can we do to bring about desirable changes?

A. Dr. O'Brien recommended Faculty Senate invite Dr. Hallmark and Barbara Petty to a Senate meeting to discuss the question. Dr. O'Brien said Human Resources was audited recently and scored a 3 on a scale of 1-5 because of lack of reference checks and documentation of faculty and staff being considered for hire. There currently is no documentation for hiring part-time instructors. WT needs a system to orient part-time instructors about university policies, syllabi, etc.

Q.7. Are you aware that the academic computing committee has little impact on computer services on this campus? Do you think that academics in general and faculty who directly deal with academic computing in particular should have an important role in

guiding the direction that computer services take?

A. The university has two computing committees chaired by Dave Rausch and James Webb. The committee chaired by Rausch will meet on 24 October. Dr. O'Brien has seen no recommendations, except Angel, from the IT committee chaired by Webb. Dr. O'Brien recommended the Committee chairs should come to Faculty Senate and report activities. Perhaps James Webb could have sit-down lunches with faculty once a month to hear input on smart classrooms, computer systems, etc.

Q.8. Would you be in favor of attempting to better coordinate scheduling of back-to-school meetings? This would help colleges and departments elect committee members and commit to a set day each semester.

A. Dr. O'Brien moved fall convocation to Tuesday so staff can be available for students arriving later in the week before classes start. New faculty orientation has been moved to the week before that.

Q.9. Might the shuttle buses be run on a set schedule (i.e., instead of leaving for campus every time someone at FUBC gets onboard) in order to save fuel? Could we arrive at a more fuel-saving arrangement that also better serves students and faculty?

A. This is the start of the 4th semester of shuttle buses. There used to be a 15-minute schedule, but now three buses run continuous cycles of four stops, with another stop being considered from the parking lot to be paved north of the baseball/softball fields. Two hundred people now ride the bus per day. The ridership schedule needs to be determined before the best bus schedule can be set.

Q.10. What are your thoughts on the third-year T&P review? Elements as outlined in Faculty Handbook seem to be unclear or uncoordinated as presently stated. Would you look into the matter and consult with Senate on perceived problems?

A. Dr. O'Brien said he will look into the problem and consult Faculty Senate. Dr. O'Brien supports a 3rd year review. A faculty member being reviewed needs to have more than the Department Head looking at his performance data. Dr. O'Brien said it is unfair not to inform faculty members how well they are doing their jobs.

Open questions by faculty in attendance:

Faculty Senate is unclear whether the standards for tenure and promotion have been approved by the university. Dr. O'Brien said he will check with Dr. Hallmark.

Faculty Senators would like the tenure and promotion process to be more consistent between departments. Dr. O'Brien said there should be consistency with the timelines but that some other inconsistencies are by design because departments, classes, and research differ and evidence for scholarly and classroom performance needs to have flexibility. Dr. O'Brien implemented funds for faculty summer research when he arrived at WT. He recently saw recommendations for merit increases of 0 to 8% for the 250 faculty at WT.

In response to a question about the proposed WT Ombuds Officer, Dr. O'Brien said a more reasonable period (60 days, instead of 30) during which to file grievances has been proposed. He said many issues could be resolved informally with a mediator and save time rather than having many people serving on a committee. Scott Kelley, Interim OGC, is reviewing the proposal, and WT is expected to hear from him soon to be able to proceed.

In response to the question "How do you rate which way academia might go during the next few years?" Dr. O'Brien said when he came to WT 5.5 years ago, state appropriations for academics were 48%, now are 33%, and probably will decrease even more. Weighted student hour appropriation has been increasing, but the WT rate needs to increase to obtain enough share of the appropriation. Funding for higher education is decreasing as a proportion of the state budget and probably will change to being based on performance. Talk is about changing to some combination of weighted student credit hour and performance based on metrics that have not been decided. WT needs to be more tuition driven. WT has a long way to go to make up the funding difference provided by the state. WT wants to graduate quality students, not just more. Dr. O'Brien is chairing a state task force on assessments for learning outcomes. He said WT must show enhanced student learning and critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills. There is need for a more educated populace than the 15% of adults in Potter County with a B.S. degree, to attract more companies to the Texas Panhandle.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie B. Pendleton".

Bonnie B. Pendleton, Secretary

These minutes were approved on 30 September 2011.