**Faculty Senate Minutes 11/14/11**

**Judith M. Ball**

**This meeting covered many topics. The notes below are not intended to be complete. Additional information may be available on the Faculty Senate web page.**

**Main items of interest:**

1. Dr. Benedik (speaker) attended a meeting on Shared Governance. TAMU is doing pretty good compared to other universities in this regard. However, when the meeting switched to governing boards, Texas was cited as an example of “a problem child”.
2. Guest speaker, Dr. Ben Wu, Director of Center for Teaching Excellence- Faculty Teaching and Learning Portal spoke about a new web page that includes an abundance of information on teaching and how students learn. This is an outcome of the Academic Master Plan. The web site is not complete but is accessible at learning.tamu.edu under resources and already includes useful material. It has many links to other teaching sites, examples of excellent teaching, how to teach large classes and other topics. Much of the information has been summarized for you with the links provided for more details. Eventually, each faculty member will have a page that will include: 1) Teaching Philosophy, 2) Course Plan and 3) Syllabus. Student reviews will also be posted on this page. The design is for a “one stop place” for information on teaching and teaching development. They anticipate the site will be completed by the middle of 2012. Currently, they are requesting excellent teachers at TAMU to write what they consider are the most important things in effective teaching.
3. Guest speaker, Brooks Moore, General Council Office, spoke on the Texas Freedom of Information Act. He and his office give legal advice to TAMU employees and assist when information (such as email from this date to that date) is requested. The act guarantees access to public information and reads that all information collected by, assembled or maintained by any governing body (including the A&M system and the State Institute of Higher Education) is open to the public. These include anything dealing with official business so if your emails are requested, the attorney will help you sort through personal items. Emails are included under Section 1.2. His advice: 1. Do not use private email accounts for University business as that would make those accounts subject to disclosure. 2. Keep you emails ‘clean’. Use the delete button and do not print emails, as paper copies are included in the disclosure. You must disclose the emails that are requested – there are stiff legal penalties if you fail to comply. Generally, a time deadline is given for when the requested material must be made available.

Not subject to the Information Act:

1. Personal emails
2. Emails concerning charity organizations or community service
3. Church / religion issues
4. Politics
5. Personal safety
6. Threat of harm
7. Certain research
8. FERPA

Subject to disclosure are work issues including:

1. P and T decisions and discussions
2. Hiring
3. Tenure recommendations
4. Evaluations

You may be able to argue against disclosing health issues. However, he noted that the Attorney General has been ruling on more disclosure, not less.

Research information may also be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, including human trials. There are exceptions if you are working on a product that can be commercialized. Unpublished data can be protected if “the data is not subject to a contract or grant”. Otherwise, it cannot be protected.

Whoever requests the information pays the cost, which to date has not been a deterrent. The university received 600 requests last year and has already received over 600 requests in 2011. Many of the requests are from students.

Key strategies to protect yourself:

1. Ask, “Should I put this in writing or pick up the phone?”
2. Delete emails on a regular basis.
3. Use an auto-delete function.
4. Avoid using personal email addresses for work issues.

**Other items of interest**:

1. There is a state mandate that the core curriculum be changed. There is a Core Curriculum Council working on this. All courses must be certified, including those that were certified in the past (re-certification is required. The core curriculum will include 42 credit hours. The current timeline is for the council to release their proposal in Feb. 2012.

2. The University has hired an outside agency (Academic Analytics) to evaluate and rank all faculty. Several members of the senate felt it was not a good use of funds since faculty are evaluated annually and questioned how an outside agency can understand what we do. The official reason given by someone out of the Dean of Faculties office was to compare our faculty productivity to peer programs that are ranked higher than TAMU. Dr. Watson has been invited to the next faculty senate meeting to discuss this issue.

6. We may see an increase in BIMS majors as general studies is being phased out. They are asking everyone to help in finding new homes for these students; some exceptions are in place.