

Minutes -TAMU Faculty Senate Meeting, October 13, 2014

Provost Watson spoke (~ 65 minutes) on several topics and answered questions from the senate.

- 1) Most of her comments concerned Vision 2020. The primary objective of Vision 2020 (started in 1997-1998) is to develop a pervasive culture of excellence. We need to step up our efforts to meet the core requirements of Vision 2020 in the next 5 years as a top tier – Land Grant University in the U.S. All TAMU colleges are in the process of drafting strategic plans to meet core goals of Vision 2020 as they pertain to each college. The administration is developing a university-wide strategic plan this fall and into spring 2015 that will be implemented starting at the end of summer 2015. Questions and needs to address: How can the university help faculty get more grant money? How can we teach today's students better? How can we better evaluate faculty? We need to be wiser with our resources, need to be fairer with each other. Bottom line – upper administration will decide on the metrics and steps to be used, but they seek input from colleges now and will use our input in the decision making process.
- 2) Concerning increases in enrollment – the state may give TAMU additional money to help with existing growth. The state will not give new money so that growth will occur. We have to grow and then ask the state to provide more money to accommodate that growth.
- 3) Annual appointment letters should go out 2 weeks after the budget is approved. That did not happen this year – that was a problem.
- 4) Cancelling of communication allowances for cell phones – cell phones for those who really need them will not happen – most of these people who continue to need cell phones paid for with university money are staff involved in first response / emergency situations. The VPs will decide on individual exceptions. The rest of those losing communication allowances already have cell phones of their own.
- 5) Unequal teaching loads across departments and colleges – yes – this does exist and it always has existed. Each unit (department) has to decide what is normal for that unit. The upper administration is not going to decide this at the university level – other than what is already mandated at the system level. [Note added by L. Abbott – if you want to find out more about this point, see the person in your department assigned to determine how each faculty member in the department is carrying out their FTE requirements. This is reported every semester for every faculty member.]
- 6) Consolidation of advising – This study needs to be done by December 1, 2014, to see if and how advising might be better accomplished across the university. This study must be done – departments / colleges cannot just say – we do not want to change. This study goes to the Provost and then decisions will be made concerning the best way forward for advising on our campus.
- 7) Concerns raised were raised that there is a disconnect between the Faculty Senate and upper administration. The Administration has a chain of command structure through the Deans and Department heads, which leaves the Faculty Senate without a clear role in shared governance. Provost Watson felt that the Faculty Senate was not consistently bringing important issues to the administration but the Senate does have a role to propose policy changes that address meaningful issues.
- 8) Presidents search – a question was asked about the diversity of the candidates identified thus far, but the Provost does not know anything more than us concerning the search. The board of regents and the chancellor runs the search, so we need to ask them.
- 9) A faculty member asked about developing a plan to evolve to free tuition for all students at TAMU. Provost Watson pointed out that this does not seem feasible. She did say that tuition, fees and a book allowance are made available to those TAMU students whose parents earn less than \$40,000 per year and TAMU students whose parents earn less than \$60,000 per year get their tuition covered.

Mark Klemm, the Capital Campaign Director from the Texas A&M foundation, spoke about the TAMU capital campaign. This is the 3rd one for TAMU. The goal has not been set but “unofficially”, 1.4 billion has been raised so far. The goal will be announced in November 2015 and the campaign will end in 2020. The theme is “lead by example”. Each college is involved in the campaign efforts [Note added by L. Abbott – Dean Green has addressed this issue at past College Hours already.]

Speaker Woolsey discussed the president search and said that several viable candidates have been identified and additional candidates are being pursued.

The consent agenda was approved with the exception of 1 course (BIOL 611) that needs additional information provided.

Reports were heard from: System Employees Benefits Advisory committee (SEBAC), Com. on Built Environment, Research Com., Academic Affairs Com. and the Planning Com. Please see one of your faculty senators who was in attendance if you want details of the committee reports. Two Fac. Sen. Task Forces will be established: 1) one to look at undergraduate graduation rate performance and 2) one to look at research expenditure increases. The faculty senate engineering caucus is going to survey their faculty to make sure that they (senators) are reporting accurately the college view. The question was raised whether all faculty should be surveyed concerning some issues?

Respectfully submitted, Louise Abbott