

TWU Undergraduate Council

October 27, 2008

Minutes

Members present: Ana Louise Keating, Kay Marsh, David Rylander, Joni Jensen, Gloria Byrd, Sally Lambert, Peggy Landrum, Stoerm Anderson, Karen Dunlap, Terry Senne, Jordan Fuchs, Kendyll Castles, Pat Devereaux, Allen Waldo, Lybeth Hodges, Guy Litton, Kim Booker, Penny Hanstein, Don Edwards.

Ex Officio members present: Judith Bean, Sharon Vincent, Sully Saucedo, Lynda Murphy, Heather Speed.

Members not present: Bobbie Ferrell, Mahmoud Sadri, Roger Shipley, Ronald Fannin, Patricia Holden-Huchton, Richard Sheardy, Tanaka Denenga.

1. Welcome by David Rylander, Chair of Committee.
2. Minutes were approved without objections.
3. David Rylander discussed membership allocation for 2009-2010. Health Sciences loses one member and Nursing adds one member; Arts and Sciences and Professional Education remained the same. These numbers will affect the Council roster and voting in the spring.
4. Judith Bean reported on Early Warning and Retention Rates.

The Early Warning system was stepped up this year and the results were that 48% of faculty who teach freshman-level courses participated. In the first four weeks of classes, progress must be assessed. In the fifth week, faculty and instructors are asked to report the students in danger of failing by using the online grade submission system. In the sixth week, a warning, not a grade, is sent to students. This list was shared with advisers and the athletics coordinator this fall. Biology and History both had high reporting numbers. The Early Warning system will be used again in the Spring 2009 semester for freshmen. In Fall 2009, the warning system will extend beyond freshmen.

Undergraduate Studies recently received the most current retention data for both freshmen and transfer students. The Retention Committee should meet and examine the data and begin working on recommendations for retention initiatives. An urgent concern is to improve the freshmen retention rate; this fall's 71% retention rate was an improvement over last year's data, but needs to be higher. Tracy Stegmair in Institutional Research can provide retention data to faculty upon request. TWU lacks a good way to track major changes across the university.

5. Committee Reports

- a. **Retention Committee:** There is work to be done but nothing to report.
- b. **Program Review Committee:** A project for the committee will be certificate programs. David Rylander asked that any member with knowledge of certificate programs share that information with committee chair, Richard Sheardy.

- d. **Course Review Committees:**

- Oral Communication Subcommittee-**

- No courses reviewed at this time.

- Global Perspectives Subcommittee-**

- No courses reviewed at this time.

- Multicultural / Women's Studies Subcommittee-**

- No courses reviewed at this time.

David Rylander asked that faculty urge their departments to submit courses for consideration, particularly for global perspectives.

6. Discussion of University Competency Graduation Requirements

Judith Bean introduced the topic: who is responsible for improving outcomes of basic intellectual competencies of the core? The Council was charged with selecting a few graduation competencies for recommendation to the Provost and Academic Council. Some examples from other universities are math and writing – students must make a C or better in all math and writing courses or take an exit test. All departments aid in addressing deficiencies. All state–required basic intellectual competencies were discussed as options for TWU adoption for university-wide responsibility.

Discussion about how to assess competencies included the following issues:
Would there be a need to train faculty and instructors to teach the competency?
How do the competencies connect of the requirements to TWU's mission.
How many competencies should be selected at this time?
Could some be implemented and others added later?

Council members voted preferences for competency selection in a straw poll:

- Critical Thinking – 14

- Writing – 13

- Computer Literacy – 12

- Oral Communications (speaking and listening) – 10

- Reading – 7

A motion was made and seconded to vote on critical thinking and then on writing, the higher result of which would be recommended to the Academic Council for adoption as a graduation requirement starting Fall 2009 with an interest by the Council in examining assessment for all competencies at a later date. With ten votes in favor, the motion carried.

A vote was called for critical thinking: 13 in favor. A vote was called for writing: 3 in favor. **The Council's recommendation is for the adoption of critical thinking as a**

university-wide competency requirement starting Fall 2009 with an interest in examining assessment for all competencies at a later date.

Factors discussed for the choice of critical thinking included:

- The significance of this skill for all baccalaureate degree graduates.
- The relatively poor performance of TWU students on this skill in the 2007 CAAP exam.
- The fact that there are no individual courses devoted to teaching this skill.
- The need for this skill with effective reading, writing, and oral communication.
- The increasing public emphasis on skills such as critical thinking for graduates.
- The availability of resources for teaching this skill and of multiple instruments for assessing this skill.

The Council's requested that this recommendation be taken to the Council of Chairs and the Faculty Senate following presentation to the Academic Council.

7. With no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.