

UHD Faculty Senate Meeting

February 21, 2012

Minutes

Present: A. Allen (President), G. Preuss (President-Elect), J. Schmertz (Secretary), P. Lyons (Past President)

J. Ahmad, C. Bachman, M. Benavides, R. Beebe, C. Burnett, A. Chiaviello, G. Evans, S. Farris, J. Hackett, J. Harned, V. Hrynkiv, P. Kintzele, P. Li, C. Nguyen, W. Nowak, A. Pavelich, R. Scott, A. Sikka, L. Spears, K. Switzer, V. Tzouanas, W. Waller, I. Wang, V. Zafiridis

Absent: S. Penkar, K. Wright

Report from Senate President Austin Allen

Allen noted that President Flores would be speaking shortly to announce and discuss UHD's new admissions standards.

Provost Chapman wants faculty to promote UHD's new "Major Opportunity" advertising campaign by taking shifts at some Houston area malls. Allen is putting the Provost's request on faculty's radar.

The Provost, FSEC, and Faculty Affairs (FAC) seem to be working toward a resolution on changes to the ORCA policy.

Allen did not discuss the Senate's questions about the Provost's plans for the new core curriculum. However, the Provost is here today and will field Senate's questions.

Report from President Flores

Flores announced that the Board of Regents had approved UHD's new admission standards unanimously, and they will be implemented in Fall 2013. Flores noted the hard work that had gone on behind the scenes to ensure this outcome. He thanked faculty committees for running analyses of the projected outcomes of various standards.

Flores emphasized that the purpose of the new standards was to ensure student success. The lower 25-40% of our FTIC students will still require remediation. The students who do not meet our new cut-off scores will be reviewed individually for extenuating circumstances in their favor, and those who are not admitted will be encouraged toward dual enrollment with UHD and the community colleges.

As part of UHD's new "Major Opportunity" campaign, students are now being photographed for billboards. There are also PSA's and radio spots. Diane Summers (Public Affairs) is developing a faculty expert list that local media can consult; this may lead to faculty being on billboards as

well. Faculty will also be asked to take a more active role in recruiting, e.g. visiting high schools and having honors' nights.

The Board of Regents has confirmed that there will be no tuition increases this year. Funding has already been set aside for advertising as a one-time expense. UHD did not qualify for growth dollars last biennium. Flores said he and Provost Chapman will begin to "reallocate positions," including faculty positions, in ways that "support growth." This does not mean they will be getting rid of departments or positions. However, they will look at efficiencies and reduce course overloads. He asked Senate and department chairs to work toward improving student retention so that eventually more faculty can be hired.

Evans asked if the moratorium on tuition increases included student fees and Sikka asked if the Board of Regents' denial of tuition increases applied to all UH System schools. Flores said the moratorium applied to the undergraduate level and thus affected UHD more than other schools that have more graduate degrees.

The TX legislature has told the THECB to standardize cut scores determining college readiness. Flores has sent the numbers to various people.

Farris asked where the mall initiative was coming from. Flores said that he wasn't sure how that promotional effort began, but that it was part of a larger recruiting effort. He has been meeting with various chambers of commerce in the NW area to promote UHD.

Chapman confirmed that faculty recruiting in the malls was one of several promotional/recruiting efforts. Next year is a base funding year and UHD needs to boost enrollment. Faculty will help staff contracted kiosks and will be wearing matching T-Shirts with UHD logos. Brochures are being developed for each major. He invited faculty to spend four hours at the mall nearest to them; faculty build more interest in a university than staff do.

Schmertz asked Flores what the role of the Budget and Efficiencies Task Force would be in deciding how to "reallocate" faculty positions. Flores said the Task Force recommendations would be considered. He said course overloads to faculty needed to be examined in the context of the 4/3 to make sure they are granted only in exceptional circumstances, e.g. to replace faculty temporarily unable to work.

Sikka agreed that course overloads should be monitored but said faculty also take on additional courses in ways that generate more SCH's and thus benefit the university. There needs to be a standardized procedure governing how/when overloads occur. Chapman said there was, but that a department had violated a deadline by sending in the paperwork for overloads "a few days ago."

Sikka said department administrative assistants are overloaded with paperwork requiring multiple signatures. Examining workflow processes would be another way to target inefficiencies.

Allen asked a question for Waller, who was en route from a conference: Will the Senate Task Force on Admissions be revived, so that faculty can work on implementation of the individual review process for students who do not meet our new admissions standards?

Lisa Montgomery, VP of Enrollment Management, said she was glad to learn there was such a task force, as she and Jose Cantu had already begun working with the provost to devise a committee structure for implementing the new standards. Staff had already begun working on processes, but faculty could play a role in strategies and implementation, e.g. how to conduct individual review and how to give students co-enrolled in UHD and a community college access to UHD's facilities before they made the transition to UHD. She said she would send Senate the flow chart and list of committee appointees but said it was not "written in stone" and faculty could chair committees. Flores underscored the importance of faculty involvement in individual reviews of students.

Farris asked how many students would be refused admission. Flores said we would lose 20-40% of FTICs but that they would be jointly admitted. Montgomery said that under the individual review process, students whose scores were close to the cutoff thresholds would not be filtered out directly to the community colleges. We are piloting summer intervention programs which would allow a retest at the end of the summer, permitting some students who had initially been rejected to enter UHD in the Fall.

Farris asked if this meant the developmental courses would be bulked up over the summer. Flores said yes, and that it will now be possible to use Accuplacer to diagnose each student's weakness and target specific interventions for those weaknesses.

Chapman said high school counselors have said that they will start now start sending their students to UHD because they believe we are a "quality university" now that we have adopted admissions standards.

Faculty Handbook Committee

Faculty Senate Executive Committee had discussed who to put on the Faculty Handbook Committee. They asked several former Senate presidents, and Nell Sullivan, Kirk Hagen, Michelle Moosally, and Anjoo Sikka were willing to serve. Allen offered these four names as a possible slate. Evans moved to approve the slate, Lyons seconded, and the motion passed, 23-0.

Report from Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS): Sikka

Sikka announced that she had just come back from a Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS) meeting. In addition to providing a forum for statewide shared governance issues, TCFS serves as a faculty liaison with THECB, and its meetings typically feature a staff member of THECB. (In the past, TCFS has had Asst Commissioners David Gardner, MacGregor Stephenson and various staff members at their meetings.) The Spring 2012 meeting featured THECB program

director Catherine Parsonneault. Parsonneault said the Component Area Option is still in flux. Three of the six hours are intended to support interdisciplinary courses. According to a proposed rule in the TX register, these three hours do not have to meet any one foundational component area and will not have to be assessed. However, they will have to meet a minimum of three core objectives, two of which must be critical thinking and communication. The public comment period is currently open and the public has until March 1 to provide input to the Texas Register, <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/pdf/backview/0203/0203prop.pdf>

Sikka said Parsonneault mentioned that the new core needed to be based on learning outcomes and institutions should decide where and how the outcomes would be assessed—in other words, outcomes assessment might not have to be embedded separately in each course.

Sikka also learned at the TCFS meeting that Senate approved a bill in 2011 requiring the assessment of university advising. The proposed rules will go to the Coordinating Board in July.

Sikka announced that there would be resources available on redesigning the core. There will be webinars conducted by Starlink conducted by Agnes DeFranco and Rex Peebles of the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee to THECB. There will also be a workshop on the core curriculum at Cisco College in Abilene on May 17.

Discussion of Core Curriculum Planning with Provost Chapman

Chapman provided his view on the historical background of the new core curriculum. Revisions to the core are significant because the core lays the foundation for more advanced work in the university. The last revision to the TX core took place in 1986, and the content was general and the core open-ended. As a result, Chapman said, departments over time began to dictate the content based on their own majors.

Harned said that faculty have not in fact pitched the core courses as introductions to the major; teachers understand that gen ed students will not study a subject in as close detail as they would in an introductory level course in a major.

Chapman responded that there is a lot of data to show that this is not true. He added that when he took his first junior level science class, he was told to “forget everything you ever learned about writing in English class” because science writes differently. Similarly, a gen ed student does not need exposure to the intricacies of biology to gain a broad introduction to it.

Chapman said that after 1986, universities had also become very prescriptive about their own institutional requirements, leading to problems with transferability across the state. Also, SACS began to look at what the other regional accrediting bodies were doing and began requiring the assessment of learning outcomes. All these factors combined to create the core we are now going to implement.

Chapman said that at a state provosts’ meeting, the idea for component area planning subcommittees was introduced, with the idea that the subcommittees would encourage a

“broader view” than that provided by departments. Chapman reported that MacGregor Stephenson (Assistant Commissioner THECB) suggested that a course in the history core need not come from history (e.g. “Economic History of the US”). TX has required students to declare their majors within 30 hours; flexibility in the core allows students to choose those courses that fit their majors, e.g. a “communications” course that taught students how to use the documentation style used in their major, or statistics rather than algebra. As a result of this meeting, the Provost developed UHD’s current committee structure for addressing the core. The committees are composed completely of faculty, with the exception of a committee for a college success course which is currently run by staff as a one-credit hour course but which he would like to see expanded to a 3-hour course focusing on things like financial literacy, study skills, and introductions to specific majors. The course’s purpose would be to improve student retention and graduation rates. The remaining three component area option hours are still open. We may hear more about them from THECB. The component area option will be where broader faculty input will occur. At the end of the process there will be a “smorgasbord” of course offerings and faculty will decide which will count toward this area.

Farris said she thought 2 of the 3 remaining hours of the 3 hours not already set aside for college success courses were to be for science labs. Chapman said UHD has the choice to put extra lab hours in the 18 hours left open to students in their first 60 hours (the core is 42 hours).

Evans said she was at UHD during the 1986 core revision and the 4 hours of science (including lab) has always been tricky and needs to be made by a broad group of faculty, especially if 2 of students’ remaining 18 lower-level hours are taken by the lab hours, hours which are often needed by the majors. Evans said she thought the Oversight task force should address these hours, not the subcommittees.

Waller noted he had just come from a first-year experience conference sponsored by UTEP. There were lots of questions about the component area option at the conference. Guidance from THECB is still vague and there will be some sort of listserv.

Switzer said the Oversight task force had discussed the fact that some majors have no room for free electives where non-core required SCH’s could be put. She asked Chapman if he understood that it was not possible to build prerequisites into the curriculum. Chapman said it was impossible because these would make it difficult for students to transfer their core to other universities. Kintzele said that the TX administrative code did not actually say this. Chapman said this was part of a “side conversation” but should be treated as if it were policy.

Pavelich asked how the oversight task force could know how much and what kind of work was being done in each of the subcommittees. Questions will continue to arise; how can we move things along? Chapman said we can make some of the more obvious changes up front; THECB “won’t show us what they want until April.” Sikka added that Senate presidents attending the spring 2012 meeting of TCFS were very concerned about the short timeline, in particular whether information about the core can be put into course catalog in time for the students admitted in 2014.

Sikka said there seems to be much confusion or unresolved issues surrounding the new mandates. We must ask for things to be put in writing from all levels (including the state). On the issue of prerequisites, faculty were concerned about the university's ability to prepare lower level students for the upper levels of the curriculum. For example, if UHD reduces its 6 core hours of English to 3, this will impact students' ability to write, unless a strong writing component is required elsewhere in the core. Sikka said that in order to enhance transparency of decision-making and coordination of effort, core curriculum subcommittees should send out minutes regularly to ensure that all subcommittees are on the same page.

Ahmad asked why there couldn't be a 2 hour science class with one hour of lab credit. This would allow teachers to "make things personal" for non-science majors. Criminal Justice students might want to know about analyzing blood spatters. Chapman mentioned electronic classrooms at Eastern N. Mexico where students were taught gen ed courses with practical applications, e.g. "The Chemistry of Cooking" and "The Physics of Science." In a demonstration he had attended for the "Chemistry of Cooking" class, eggs were boiled in beakers and students were told the green around a boiled yolk came from a chemical reaction that produced copper.

Waller said that the THECB language pertaining to the component area option said the option could be used to "extend and develop" a foundational component area. Couldn't this be a way to require sequenced courses? Chapman said no, courses in a component area could not be sequenced because all courses in that area had to have the same competencies. Waller said that the learning objectives had to be different; otherwise the two courses "would be the same course." If an institution decided to extend its requirements in, for example, history, wouldn't it be possible to put the first half in the foundational component area and the second half in the component option area? Chapman said this could be possible.

Kintzele noted that the TX administrative code uses the term "core objectives" and that he understood that to qualify for inclusion in the core, a course's learning outcomes would need to satisfy these "core objectives." At what point will learning outcomes enter into subcommittee discussions? Will the calls for course proposals sent out by the subcommittees include learning outcomes, or will the committees end up getting a bunch of courses with diverging learning outcomes and have to map these onto the THECB "core objectives" themselves? Chapman said the learning outcomes could be satisfied in many ways.

Evans underscored the importance of subcommittee minutes or some other sort of internal communication mechanism. This will minimize miscommunication between subcommittees and antagonism between departments. We will also need to provide a record of our efforts to SACS at some point, so a written record becomes important for these purposes as well. Chapman said the Oversight Task force should manage communication issues.

Lyons said we needed to go back to the beginning of the process. UHD needs to consider how extensive the revisions to the core actually need to be (while still staying within the state mandate). He read from a transcript of a conversation members of the English department had held with Rex Peebles, co-chair of the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee previously

mentioned by Sikka. Peebles said THECB recognized that the curriculum could look a lot like the one we have now. The courses will be similar to ones we have, but with the core objectives spread more liberally throughout the core. Peebles also said that THECB believes that faculty should decide what rubrics and criteria for eligibility should be used in determining the core. The provost would sign off on the core, but the process should be bottom-up, rather than top-down. Lyons said we had “jumped the gun” before having a discussion about how UHD should approach the new core.

He also said that faculty innovate all the time to improve their courses and meet students’ needs. While the new core can and should be a mechanism for having a long overdue discussion on the core, we should not assume in advance what those revisions will look like.

Chapman responded that a lot of the current courses can be redesigned with new objectives. We can also develop courses for both majors and non-majors. He noted that the area hit most will involve literature faculty. Literature previously was a separate requirement of the core. It is now lumped in with several other disciplines in the Literature, Language and Culture foundational component area. Faculty will need to make sure they offer courses that attract students.

Preuss said that History has received new learning objectives from the Coordinating Board that will need to be taken into consideration. Chapman said we also need to take into consideration the core courses made available through MIT and Stanford. We can use them free of charge as long as we relay back how we have used/adapted them.

Pavelich said Philosophy and Humanities had been trying to get courses in the core but had been told to “save it” and wait for the new core to arrive. He said the Humanities requirement was now occupied by sophomore literature and that it was unjust for humanities courses not to be part of a humanities requirement. He challenged Lyons’ claim that we should make as few changes as possible to meet the state requirement. Lyons said he had not made that claim, and reiterated his point that UHD needs to consider what it wants to do rather than assume there would be a bunch of new courses. If faculty actually want to submit a bunch of new courses, this would be the time to do it.

Farris noted that the new competencies are very vague—for example they don’t state how much actual reading and writing students need to do to satisfy them. She asked if the subcommittees would have the authority to build more specificity into the competencies to meet the needs of the institution. She also asked if the committees should consider how to scale the courses up to meet volume while still staying within SACS requirements for fulltime coverage. Chapman said the subcommittees could consider all these factors.

Moosally said that she had talked to Catherine Parsonneault from THECB when she was at Texas Council for Faculty Senates (TCFS). There seem to be different messages coming out of Austin on the subject of prerequisites. Moosally mentioned the English 1301-1302 sequence which is standard across the state and in the academy. She understood Parsonneault to be indicating that prerequisites could exist, at least in a case like composition, although there are also some

restrictions about prerequisites on courses that count for the same hours in the core. Moosally suggested we need to get a clearer understanding from THECB of how prerequisites within the core will be handled before deciding for or against any of them.

Respectfully submitted,
Johanna Schmertz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English
Faculty Senate Secretary