

# MSU Faculty Senate

## September 2007 Minutes

The MSU Faculty Senate met at 3:00 p.m. on September 13, 2007, in the Kiowa Ex-Students Dining Room in the CSC. Senators present included Black, Alan; Coe, Mary Ann; Comello, Robert; Donovan, Tim; Dover, Ernest (Parliamentarian); Giddings, Greg; Goldberg, Gary; Gooch, Roxanne; Gorham, Jim; Hallford, Randal; Harlow, Kirk; May, Marsha (Treasurer); McClintock, Stuart (Secretary); Medford, Ann; Owen, James; Redmon, Bob (Chair); Rincon-Zachary, Magaly; Schmitter, Joel. Joel Schmitter has replaced Dana Mills from the College of Science and Mathematics.

The agenda was unanimously approved. August minutes had previously been approved by e-mail.

### *Current Business:*

1. Dr. Rogers accepted an invitation to address the Senate to discuss, in particular, his decision to recommend to the Board of Regents to have background checks performed on incoming faculty members. He also took this opportunity to talk about other issues such as the university's budget and state's system of higher education funding. He also agreed to field any questions from the Senate.

Dr. Rogers first thanked members of the Senate for their service to the university and for being an important advisory voice to the President.

He also stated that he had spent the previous weekend with twenty-three of the twenty-five presidents of COPLAC universities to begin developing a strategic plan for that organization.

**Background checks:** He then addressed his decision to recommend to the Board of Regents to have background checks performed on incoming faculty. He gave his reasoning for coming to this decision after five years of consideration. First, these checks are already being done on all incoming staff. Secondly, the present climate in society and at universities warrants such action in order to protect all members of the university community from any possible disaster and from any second-guessing in the event of a tragedy. The President said that checks would not be done on current faculty members.

Dr. Rogers wanted to know the Faculty Senate's concerns about this issue and opened the floor for questions and comments. Senator Goldberg thought it would be a good idea to have the application form clearly state that a background check would take place on the applicant. Provost Wiedemann, who was in attendance to address the Senate on other issues, said that this information would be in the job announcement and that the check would only be performed on the finalist. Senator Gorham asked at what level the decision would be made on the candidate who has a conviction. Both Dr. Rogers and Dr. Wiedemann said that consideration of a candidate would go through a chain of command from the police chief and human resources to department chair up through to the Provost and the President so that a single person would not be making the final decision. Dr. Rogers said that a candidate with a conviction would not be automatically eliminated from consideration. Senators wondered who would perform such a check. The

university's chief of police has access to data banks that maintain criminal records, and outside services also can provide this information.

Senators Medford and Coe stated that health science and education students going into hospitals and schools also have background checks done on them.

**The budget:** Dr. Rogers then discussed the university's budget and the state's system of funding higher education.

The President provided documentation how the four hundred fifty million dollars that the state budgeted in 08-09 for higher education is divided among Texas state universities. He described a funding system that is arbitrary, unsystematic, based on outdated models, and controlled by some powerful legislators who can deliver large amounts of money to universities in their districts. Midwestern, like many other Texas state institutions, is suffering financially because of this broken system. For example, the university's request for 1.6 million dollars to fund an Advising Center has so far been rejected, while other universities' requests for much larger sums have been granted.

Dr. Rogers chairs the committee that is devising the new funding formula, and he insisted that establishing a fair funding formula levels the playing field among universities and is the best way to ensure that every university is protected and none is subject to legislators' whims.

The President stated that he has never been as worried about the entire funding process as he is at present. He is concerned that other university presidents are not speaking out about this situation. He would also like to encourage TACT to make this issue its main priority because it is the primary way to solve funding shortages at many state universities.

Because the state did not fund the university as expected this year, Dr. Rogers had to cut one million dollars from the university's operating budget right before classes were to start. He also had to take two million dollars from the university's reserves to meet operating costs.

Dr. Rogers opened the floor for questions. Senator Harlow asked if there were not some way to get in the game and be one of the universities that benefits from the funding system. Dr. Rogers stated that, in the past, he had counted on formula funding to meet the university's budget needs and had made modest dollar estimates for special items requests. He now foresees being less conservative about the amounts he requests for future special items.

**Parking tags:** The university will redesign the parking tags so that they will fit on all cars. In the past, each member of the faculty, staff, and administration was issued two parking stickers. Dr. Rogers explained that too many second stickers had been used by people who did not have the right to use them. As a result, everyone is now given a single tag. The President hopes that this system will open up a lot of reserved parking places that had previously been taken by people with stickers who had no right to them.

Senators May and Donovan mentioned that finding a spot in reserved parking at busy times seemed to be easier than last year.

**Non-smoking campus:** Dr. Rogers would like MSU to be a non-smoking campus. He stated that it is the kind of issue for which people have to give something for the good of the group. He thinks the university should take steps to teach healthy living as part of its mission. To this end, wellness programs for smokers would be established. He also thinks that university policies should encourage environmental protection, and he is troubled by the mess that cigarettes with non-biodegradable filters are creating all over the campus.

For the moment, he will not make a recommendation to the Board of Regents about this issue, but he does want the Senate to know he feels very strongly about it.

**Recycling:** In response to a question about recycling, Dr. Rogers stated that creating a green campus has risen significantly on his priority list. He will get started by discussing this issue with Allen Goldapp, director of the physical plant.

He also said that COPLAC meetings this summer will focus on creating a green campus.

Some recycling projects already exist on campus or are projected. The American Chemical Society Student Affiliates is already recycling all kinds of white paper on campus. It collects paper in designated blue barrels in some offices and in the computer labs. Further, Senator Coe reported that the Student Affairs Committee had made some proposals for recycling.

2. Provost Wiedemann also addressed the Senate about several issues.

**Class size:** The Provost clarified issues regarding class size for undergraduate and graduate courses. She began by explaining standard procedure on campus. Classes make for undergraduate courses with ten students and for graduate courses with five. She stated that there were many circumstances that warranted classes with fewer students to proceed. The Provost must present a list of courses below the 10/5 enrollment rule to the Board of Regents every semester and must explain the reasons for allowing a course to continue. The university's highest priority is to offer the type and number of courses to students so that they can graduate in a timely way. If a student needs a class to graduate, it will not be cancelled. She also stated that making a two-year course schedule would benefit students so they can better plan their course schedules.

Because of the state's funding shortfall addressed by Dr. Rogers above, the President asked the Provost to cut 200,000 dollars from the funds dedicated to part-time, overload, and summer salaries. She was forced to eliminate some scheduled classes that had very low enrollment so that other similar classes would fill up. She had to cut adjuncts' classes with low enrollments. Full-time faculty members who had a class cut because of low enrollment took over an adjunct's class because a full-time faculty member generally must teach a full load.

The Provost also began to look at undergraduate courses with fewer than fifteen students and graduate courses with fewer than seven to see if some consolidation might be feasible to avoid having multiple sections of the same course with low enrollment. Some consolidation of this nature has occurred. She stated that courses get fuller when fewer courses are offered.

Dr. Wiedemann wanted to clarify a misunderstanding circulating on campus. She has not made a rule that undergraduate courses must have fifteen students and graduate courses seven. She apologized for any confusion that has occurred over this issue.

**Salaries:** Dr. Wiedemann said that a pool representing a three-percent raise was given to deans to distribute to his/her faculty based on merit. Further, the Provost compared national averages to salaries across the campus and added up to three thousand dollars to a professor's salary so that it comes closer to the national average. She stated that salaries in the Dillard College of Business and in computer science are the furthest from the national average.

She also added five hundred dollars to the stipend that department chairs already receive.

She said that an ad hoc committee was examining work-load issues so that the university complies with the policy manual. The committee is trying to get its recommendations to the Board of Regents by November.

Senator Coe asked if the university could wait a little longer before the early cancellation of graduate courses with low enrollment. She said that graduate students tended to wait until the last minute to register. Because of early cancellation, students have fewer classes in which to enroll, and the classes tend to be bigger than they should be for a graduate course.

Senator Gooch asked if a cost/savings analysis had been done with respect to enrollment numbers. If not, she thought it might be a good idea for the future.

**Emergencies:** Dr. Wiedemann wanted to share some useful information presented at a recent TACT meeting. If you have an emergency and can call the police, you can say that you need **Form 1033**, which is code for an emergency, and the police will respond.

*Committee and Other Reports:*

1. Administrative Council (Redmon): (no report)
2. Board of Regents (Redmon): At its August meeting, the Board of Regents approved the President's request to take money from the university's reserve to meet operating costs. At a special session on September 6, the Board of Regents awarded Outside Counsel to Roger Lee of Gibson, Hotchkiss, Roach and Davenport. It also awarded the Investment Management Services contract to American National Bank.
3. Academic Council (Stiles): (no report)
4. Enrollment Management (May): (see end of minutes)
5. Intercollegiate Athletics Council (Comello): (no report)
6. Alumni Association Council (Watts): (no report)
7. Student Affairs (Coe):
8. Other active committees: none
9. Financial report (May): The Faculty Senate has \$ 1,748.

*Closing Items:*

*New Business:*

1. Chair Redmon asked Senators to encourage members of their colleges to vote for the Faculty Award. Senators Owen and Gooch reported that about 125 ballots had been received so far.
2. Senator Medford made a motion to support Dr. Rogers' decision to perform background checks on incoming faculty members. The motion was seconded by Senator Coe. Senator Owen thought it would be a good idea to have checks done by an outside organization specializing in this activity. Parliamentarian Dover had a reservation about the policy. He wanted to make sure that a conviction would not automatically eliminate a candidate from consideration. The Senate reviewed discussion from earlier in the meeting. Dr. Rogers clearly stated that a conviction would not automatically eliminate a candidate from consideration. The President outlined a procedure for examining a candidate at multiple levels.  
The motion passed.

After soliciting further comment, Chairman Redmon entertained a motion to close the meeting. The Senate adjourned at 5:00.

*Committee Reports:*

**Enrollment Management Council**

The Enrollment Management Council met on September 11, 2007.

Darla English presented proposed academic calendars for 2008-2010. The calendars will be discussed and voted on in Academic Council. She then stated that the 2008 Spring Schedule is currently in progress and that this is a catalog production year with a February deadline. Lastly, she talked about Senate Bill 1231 which states that freshmen entering in the Fall, 2007 or later cannot drop more than six classes without cause. The Registrar's Office has listed possible reasons for dropping a class on The Procedures for Dropping a Class form and will not allow students affected by SB 1231 to turn in a drop slip without stating a reason.

Barbara Merkle discussed a new CLEP test for Financial Accounting 2143 and Placement tests for English credit were also discussed. Both items will go to Academic Council.

Submitted by Marsha May  
Faculty Senate Representative

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart McClintock  
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Bob Redmon  
Chairman of the Faculty Senate

The next Executive Committee meeting will be at 3 PM on October 4, 2007, in the Apache Boardroom in CSC.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be at 3 PM on October 11, 2007, in Kiowa Ex-Students Dining Room in CSC.