

MSU Faculty Senate

February 2009 Minutes

The MSU Faculty Senate met at 3:00 p.m. on February 5, 2009, in the Kiowa Ex-Students Room in CSC. Senators present included Black, Alan; Bultena, Charles (Treasurer); Capps, Matthew; Carlston, David; Dover, Ernie (Parliamentarian); Fields, Peter; Giddings, Greg; Harlow, Kirk; Hiraide, Suguru; Knox, Michelle; Lewis, Gary; Lockhart, Robin; Masuoka, Jim; McClintock, Stuart (Secretary); Morrison, Gary; Owen, James (Vice-Chair); Schmitter, Joel; Wyatt, Frank; Zhang, Grace.

In Chair Medford's absence, Vice-Chair Owen conducted the meeting.

The agenda was unanimously approved. The minutes of the January meeting had previously been approved by e-mail.

Current Business:

1. Dr. Rogers met with the Faculty Senate.

Finances: President Rogers said that the university's financial condition was sound after the 07-08 fiscal year. The university has ten million dollars in reserve. In 07-08, Dr. Rogers added needed faculty in high-demand areas such as nursing. He also gave raises to faculty and staff. A 1% raise costs the university between 500,000 and 600,000 dollars. As a result of raises and new hiring, Dr. Rogers thought he would have to go into the university's reserves to finance a 2.5 million dollar deficit. Because the university received "success money" from the state and saved money from its energy plan, Dr. Rogers had to deal with a much smaller deficit of 200,000 dollars.

As for the present fiscal year, he is cautious because he does not know what the legislature will enact and what the economic situation will bring.

The Board of Regents has capped MSU tuition increases at a maximum of five percent a year, which is the percent increase Dr. Rogers will propose at the upcoming Board of Regents meeting. One reason that tuition continues to rise is that the state is contributing less to a student's education than it did in the past. Ten years ago, the state contributed \$4,200 per student taking a full load. Today that figure is \$3,800.

New or renovated buildings on campus: Dr. Rogers hears complaints that university money funds the construction and renovation of buildings on campus. He wants to make it clear that no tuition or operational money is used to pay for any construction. Higher Education Assistance Funds (HEAF) and private donations pay for such work.

Parking: Dr. Rogers is aware that the university has a parking problem. Fifty new parking spots were recently created, and another 150 will exist by September 2009.

Planning committees have looked into building a parking garage. At the moment, Dr. Rogers is reluctant to proceed with such a project because the price of a garage would cost students an estimated \$200 per semester in parking fees.

In any future building project, Dr. Rogers strongly feels that maintaining as much green space as possible must be a priority. The beauty of the campus is one of the university's primary

attractions, and the President does not want future building projects to impact negatively on that beauty.

Student evaluations: Dr. Rogers reported that other universities are having a problem with deciding between on-line and paper evaluations. Each college at UNT chooses the system it prefers.

Dr. Rogers realizes that some colleges are invested in using the on-line evaluation system while other colleges find it to be an impractical system because of class size and lack of lab space.

Dr. Rogers has charged the Provost with setting up a committee to deal with the entire evaluation process. The committee will look at creating an evaluation tool for on-line courses. It will also study paper evaluations versus on-line evaluations.

Mike Dye, Director of Information Systems, will be a member of this committee. He will be looking at a scanner in the next weeks that is inexpensive (\$1,500) and very efficient. If such a machine is practical, it would facilitate using paper evaluations.

Questions and comments from Senators:

A senator asked Dr. Rogers how he saw morale among faculty members on campus. The President stated that the economic situation would not result in loss of faculty or in cuts in salaries. He asked the faculty to have faith in him.

Some Senators mentioned that morale issues were not only economic, that the decision making process was becoming increasingly autocratic, and that the faculty were not being listened to and not being included in certain decision making processes that directly affect them. The switch to campus-wide on-line evaluations without any faculty input was given as an example.

Traffic on Midwestern Parkway near the new dorms and recreation center: A Senator expressed concern about potential danger to pedestrians at Midwestern Parkway where the new dorms and the recreation center are. Dr. Rogers has already been promised a series of blinking lights, turn lanes, and a reduction in the speed limit from forty to thirty.

Teacher overload: Senator Fields asked Dr. Rogers to consider some sort of help for Nathan Jun, the new philosophy professor, in managing his teaching load. Dr. Jun has four different classes with a total of 144 students. This is a very heavy workload, particularly since he considers each of his courses to be a writing course. Rather than discouraging students from taking philosophy classes or capping the size of classes in order to lighten his load, Dr. Jun would like the administration to consider adding a faculty member in some adjunct capacity in order to maintain the number of philosophy students but to spread them out in more classes that would be taught by another professor. Dr. Rogers said he would look into Dr. Jun's situation.

2. Executive Committee meeting with Dr. Rogers: The Executive Council met with Dr. Rogers two weeks ago to discuss the evaluation system. Senators reiterated their concerns about the various shortcomings of the present on-line evaluation system. Dr. Rogers was receptive to the Council's concerns.

Dr. Rogers also expressed his interest in meeting regularly throughout the semester with the Executive Council in order to maintain closer contact with the faculty.

3. Faculty Work Environment Satisfaction (FWES) survey: Senators Carlston, Knox, and Wyatt reported on their committee's work that developed the following proposal that calls for, one, the establishment of a faculty satisfaction survey and, two, specifies the way such a survey would be implemented. The committee feels that any such survey must have some teeth, that it must be

done regularly, and that it must be done by a third party. Outside agencies charge between three and ten thousand dollars to do surveys.

1. As stated in the Faculty Senate Constitution, the Faculty Senate is to “make recommendations to the appropriate administrative officers on policies regarding: employment, salaries, promotion and tenure, fringe benefits, retirement and emeritus status... [and] any issue brought to it by a member of the faculty.” The current, informal process of transmitting these issues “to the Senate through one of its members” does not adequately provide a picture of faculty concerns with sufficient breadth and depth as to be actionable. Therefore, the Faculty Senate resolves that a formal procedure be established to obtain meaningful data regarding faculty work environment satisfaction (FWES).
2. In order to maintain an objective, informative, and regular process of evaluation, the Faculty Senate resolves that Midwestern State University initiate an assessment process as outlined below:
 - a. FWES data collection should be an ongoing process, beginning no later than Fall 2009.
 - b. Given the broad relevance of FWES data (e.g., improving faculty retention, facilitating faculty/administrative recruiting, informing Faculty Senate), a university committee reporting to the President should oversee an ongoing assessment process. Such a committee ideally will be chaired by a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and will include one faculty rep from each college, a representative from Institutional Research, and a representative from the Deans.
 - c. To increase both the reliability and validity of obtained findings, formal evaluations of FWES must be collected and analyzed by an external agent. Furthermore, the instrument used by said agent must be created for the specific intent of assessing *faculty* work environment (i.e., academia) rather than general workplace satisfaction.
 - d. Faculty work environment satisfaction objectives should be incorporated in the university Strategic Plan.
 - e. Given the general usefulness of FWES data, summative reports with normative data, where possible, should be regularly provide to the Board of Regents, President, Provost, Deans, and administrative heads.
 - f. Summative reports should be made public domain.

Senator Carlston motioned to accept the committee's proposal with a second by Senator Knox. Before voting on the proposal, the Faculty Senate discussed it at some length. Some Senators thought that the members of the Faculty Senate should poll their constituents to see whether they wanted to institute such a mechanism. Some Senators wondered if this survey would be looked upon as another bureaucratic task that would be ignored by most faculty members. Others thought it was a given that an institution like MSU would have a faculty satisfaction survey. Many saw the use of a faculty satisfaction survey as the only way for the entire faculty to express themselves on a wide range of issues. Data derived from surveys could be used to improve the university.

As adjournment time approached, issues about the proposal were unresolved. Therefore, Senator Bultena motioned to table discussion until the next meeting and to take the issue back to faculty for their opinion. Senator Fields seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Committee and Other Reports:

1. Administrative Council (Medford): (no report)
2. Board of Regents (Medford): (no report)
3. Academic Council (Owen): (no report)
4. Enrollment Management (Mills): (no report)
5. Intercollegiate Athletics Council (Black): (no report)
6. Student Affairs (Medford): (no report)
7. Other active committees: (none)
8. Financial report (Bultena): The Faculty Senate has \$183.

Closing Items:

1. Announcements: Texas Council of Faculty Senates meeting is on March 6 and 7. Any Senator interested in attending should contact Chair Medford.
2. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:55.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart McClintock
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

James Owen
Vice-Chairman of the Faculty Senate

The next Executive Committee meeting will be at 3 PM on March 5, 2009, in the Apache Boardroom in CSC.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be at 3 PM on Thursday, March 12, 2009, in Kiowa Ex-Students Dining Room.