

SHSU Faculty Senate Minutes

Sam Houston State University

22 October 2015

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

LSC 304

Chair Lisa Shen called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

In attendance: Irfan Ahmed, Nancy Baker, Jonathan Breazeale, Madhu Choudhary, Diane Dowdey, Karla Eidson, William Jasper, Jeff Littlejohn, William Lutterschmidt, Karen Miller, Sheryl Murphy-Manley, Lisa Shen, Stacy Ulbig

Absent: Joan Bytheway; Randy Garner; Donna Cox; David McTier; Gary Oden; John Domino; Debbi Hatton; Jason Payton; Tracy Bilsing; Don Bumpass; Mark Frank; Andrea Foster; Diana Nabors; Melinda Miller; James Landa; Mark Klespis; Douglas Ullrich; Dwayne Pavelock

Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes of the October 8th meeting has been postponed.

Special guests

Bala Maniam

James Olson

Due to the lack of a quorum, Faculty Senate held an informational meeting limited to discussion only.

Distinguished Professor Policy

Special guests Dr. Maniam and Dr. Olson attended to answer senators' questions regarding the recent proposed revisions to the Distinguished Professor policy. Senators expressed a variety of concerns, starting with the removal of Associate Professors from eligibility for consideration of Distinguished Professor status. The Regents asked universities to assign criteria for this honor, and in the past, SHSU has allowed Associate Professors to be considered.

Dr. Maniam offered as background information that the committee examined the policy in 2013 and developed proposed revisions to the policy at that time. The proposed changes were submitted to the provost but never made it to Senate. In Spring 2015 the committee membership changed, and the older members on the committee were asked to make changes with which new members were also comfortable. This is why the proposed policy changes are coming before Senate now.

Dr. Maniam explained the proposed change re: eligibility as a committee decision based on common practice at other institutions and on having departments provide a basic filtering of who has demonstrated excellence. The committee felt that consideration should only be given to those holding the rank of Full Professor, as achieving this status (and being promoted by one's department) requires excellent teaching, excellent service, and an excellent record of research and publication. The committee wanted candidates to be outstanding in all three areas; if one were remarkable in teaching and service but never achieved full professor status, this would imply never having reached a level of excellence in research and publication. Most schools look at someone who is accomplished in all three areas as meeting the criteria of being distinguished.

A senator asked, the Regents require 5 years of full professorship for their honor, but why do we require that here, for the SHSU Distinguished Professor honor? Dr. Maniam replied that this is due to the fact that people may enter SHSU as full professors, and we need some time to see what their contribution is to SHSU as faculty here, though this has not been an issue in the past.

Another senator inquired what or who comprised the "initial screening committee" in a department, referred to in the policy. Dr. Maniam explained that this was the Departmental Tenure and Promotion Committee (DPTAC). The committee decided that a nominee must be considered worthy of this honor by his/her own department, as expressed by his/her DPTAC. In answer to the question of whether there has been any formalization of the DPTAC as the screening committee, Dr. Maniam said that in 2013, the committee wanted the DPTAC to become the official screening committee. Dr. Olson added that self-nominations were becoming a problem, with the same people doing this year after year. Using the DPTAC ended this problem – no more self-nominations have occurred since.

A senator pointed out that the policy is written in such a manner that there appears to be required one area of extreme excellence (either research or teaching or service), but then the policy emphasizes the use of outside evaluators to determine excellence in research. This contrast seems to emphasize excellence in research over excellence in teaching or service. Why is that? Dr. Maniam responded that nominees from departments such as music, etc., may have excellence in creative endeavors or scholarly attainments beyond the expertise of committee members to determine the quality of, so two lists of outside reviewers are required to determine the quality of the research or creative endeavors. The committee does this to avoid bias. The committee can determine teaching or service excellence, but not always research excellence.

Follow-up questions were asked: if someone's area of extreme excellence is not in research, should the outside reviewers be at the discretion of the committee? Why should it be required of all nominees? Dr. Maniam answered that the committee was trying to avoid someone who is amazing at teaching to win on that basis alone – the committee wants people who excel in all three areas. A senator queried, what if

outside evaluators say someone's research is fine but not amazing, but that person's special excellence is in service? Dr. Maniam responded that the committee would take that into account in the final determination, but rely on the committee's own assessment of service. Outside evaluators have a say on the research component, but do not decide the value of a nomination.

Another senator asked if tenured faculty members who move into administration are eligible to be nominated for this honor. No, Dr. Maniam replied, you must be a full-time tenured faculty member. Administrators are not eligible. If you had been an administrator but then returned to your department, you would become eligible again.

Dr. Maniam and Dr. Olson spoke for a few minutes on recent changes to the policy, linking the new, earlier deadlines to the policy change requiring outside evaluators for research. Dr. Olson offered that when he was a nominee for this honor in the 1990s, he was asked to provide two lists of outside evaluators. So, the committee has used outside evaluators before. In the last 10-15 years, the committee has tended to emphasize excellence in research and excellence in service has become less emphasized.

A senator pointed out that, under the listed criteria the committee considers teaching, service and research, but the way one becomes a full professor is not standardized across the university. If an Associate Professor did enough to be a Full Professor in one dept but not in their own department, shouldn't that be an argument for keeping the Associate Professor rank as eligible for this honor?

Dr. Maniam said no. He explained that excellence in teaching and service does not seem to be enough in any department for promotion to full professor, unless there is also excellence in research. The committee is leaving it to the individual departments to decide that someone has done sufficient work to become a full professor, rather than having the committee determining this. If a department decides that someone is not worthy to be a full professor, then the department is not going to support a nomination of the candidate for the Distinguished Professor honor.

Another senator suggested that perhaps the confusion lies in the criteria not matching exactly what the committee is considering over the last few years – that research has become more important and service less important. A different senator suggested that, since the policy seems to value the three pillars equally, perhaps the policy needs to be revised and written more clearly to explain that research is paramount. Dr. Maniam disagreed, saying that the committee wants all three areas to be considered, so that the rank of Distinguished Professor does not become simply a research award.

A senator requested clarification of the membership of the review committee. The policy states that, of the 9 members, 3 should hold the Distinguished Professor title. Out of the 3, at least one should hold that rank for at least 5 years. So, can other members not hold these ranks/honors? In the case of the newer colleges, we would need to allow people onto the committee who were not Distinguished Professors. Dr. Maniam explained that the provost can select other people from other colleges, not just professors with the rank/honor of Distinguished Professor.

At this point, the Senate thanked Dr. Maniam and Dr. Olson for their time and helpful answers to the Senate's many questions, and Dr.s Maniam and Olson left.

As only 13 senators out of 31 were present, there was not a quorum as is required for matters involving votes, etc. The Senate decided to continue discussing the issue of the Distinguished Professor policy. In the course of the discussion, Chair Lisa Shen informed the Senate that the Provost understands some of the Senate's concerns, but does not agree with all of them. She told the Senate that we can make recommendations to the Provost of changes we want to see, and he will decide which changes to adopt.

A senator commented that his department had to do a lot of work to find a list of Distinguished Professors a few years ago, and this raised a number of problems. The faculty doesn't know what the results look like when the committee has decided on nominees. We should have a list of all Distinguished Professors and a brief biography for each, so people can see what a successful nominee looks like. Right now, it's a mystery as to who receives the honor and why, when this needs to be clear and public. This would help a department to figure out whom to nominate and why. Finally, SHSU should keep names on the list even if the person is no longer here, because a complete list provides an example of who was seen as worthy of the honor. We could also include those who have died, as examples of what counted in the past.

Other senators added that the policy says that people given the title are intended to hold it forever. So, even if you die, you should still have the title. If you leave the TSUS system, the honor should still be on your c.v. We ought to have it on our website so it can be double-checked and documented.

Calendar

Chair Lisa Shen invited discussion of the proposed academic calendar for 2016-2017. Senators had a number of comments to offer.

The drop-date was an issue of concern. Chair Shen reminded everyone that, pre-2013, the calendar drop date was the last day of class. During 2013, there was a lot of discussion on the drop date. In February 2103, the University Affairs committee wanted the date moved to the 12th week of class. After consideration, the Senate passed a recommendation that the drop date be moved to the 10th week of class, and

this recommendation was sent forward. Chair Shen explained that 11.25 weeks into the semester would be a compromise between the last day and the 10th week. That is where the drop date is currently (between 11th and 12th week) – at the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark of the semester. So the two drop dates listed on the calendar for 2016-2017 are at the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark.

One senator requested the history on why the drop date was the last day of class. Other senators answered that this was done to allow students to maximize their chances to do well in the class or drop it without consequence. State institutions have required reports on issues such as retention rates, and the drop date on the last day of class was likely done to help SHSU look as good as possible in these required reports.

A senator suggested that we limit the number of Q drops; students have 5 Q drops allowed right now. Chair Shen will find out who sets the rules on Q drops.

Chair Shen will point out to the Calendar Committee that the language is not the same re: drop dates (Q drop, or not a Q drop?) for Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Chair Shen will also check on whether the drop date is before the IDEA evaluations occur.

Several senators expressed frustration about the rush for Senate to approve the calendar and registered their disapproval for such an important task being handled quickly.

Regarding summer classes, senators asked if Summer I courses could be started a bit later, so that teachers taking classes would not be doing so while still teaching. One senator praised the schedule change of Summer II courses starting AFTER July 4, which ends the problem of students not coming to class before July 5 because they're on holiday.

SHSU's Spring Break currently matches Huntsville ISD's Spring Break, but not the Spring Break of the surrounding school systems. The College of Education would like to see SHSU's Spring Break match surrounding school systems, and Dean Edmondson will reach out to Huntsville ISD to see if they will change their Spring Break to match surrounding districts. Senator Karla Eidsen is on a focus group working on this and she says the very best solution would be for Huntsville ISD to have the same Spring Break as the other districts.

Campus Carry

Chair Shen reminded the Senate that next Tuesday and Wednesday are the campus town hall meetings on the issue of campus carry. She has met with the University Policy Department. She has also introduced the idea of campus door locks to the Campus Carry Committee, and they say it is not under their purview. The provost will talk to Dr. Hernandez about the funding for changing door locks. Chair Shen asked TSUS attorney Rhonda Beassie if a list can be compiled of all licensed, concealed handgun owners and Ms. Beassie told her that information is confidential

and can be requested only by law enforcement. During Legislative Session #80, Texas lawmakers changed the law to make those records confidential and available only to law enforcement. The Department of Safety will provide the name, DOB, race and zip code of such persons, and those persons will be informed that their information was requested, by whom, and for what purpose.

Chair Shen urged senators to encourage colleagues to fill out the survey on campus carry. Ms. Beassie will be preparing FAQs for any questions that can be handled in this way. Survey comments will go right to the committee for consideration, as input into the policies being devised.

Once the campus carry policies have been written by the tentative deadline of February 1, President Hoyt will send an official recommendation to the Board of Regents. The Regents will approve the policy; if 2/3 of the Regents vote no on the policy, the Regents can edit it. Every two years, university policies on campus carry will be up for review by the State Legislature (or a committee of the legislature). Community colleges have an extra year to comply.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.