

# Faculty Senate Meeting—December 1, 2015

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**Senators Present:** Bart Ballard, April Conkey, Kathleen Rees, Armando Ibanez, Christine Fiestas, Barbara Cooke, Pamela Wright, Ryan Paul, Elizabeth Janzen, Richard Miller, Kendra Huff, Ruth Chatelain-Jardon, Don Jones, Daniel Burt, Alberto Rodriguez, Monica Wong Ratcliff, Chongwei Xiao, Nuri Yilmazer, Rajab Chaloo, David Ramirez, Bruce Marsh, Amit Verma, Polly Allred, Jody Briones, Valerie Bartelt, Patricia Huskin, Nestor Sherman, Lifford McLauchlan, Hong Zhou, Maria de Jesus Ayala-Schueneman

**Senators Absent:** Eliezer Louzada (3), Manuel Flores (2), Joachim Reinhuber (3), Xiaoliu Chi (4), Stan Hodges (4), Melody Knight (1), Joseph Sai (2), Ryan Rhoades (3)

**Attending:** Dr. Stephen Nix, Abigail De La Mora,

❖ **Quorum Call 3:30:**

- *Dr. Verma asked parliamentarian, Dr. Nestor Sherman, if there were enough members for a quorum. Dr. Sherman replied in the affirmative.*

❖ **Approval of Minutes from November 3, 2015 Senate Meeting:**

- *Dr. Verma asked for review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes, which had been emailed out to the senators.*
  - Dr. Chaloo asked for correction on his statement regarding the question to Dr. Abdelrahman about funds being used for the university. It is implied in the minutes that he was asking about grant monies but he was asking about enrollment monies generated. Dr. Allred confirmed the correction to the November minutes.
  - A motion for the amended minutes was made and then seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

➤ **Presentation from Provost:**

- *Dr. Heidi Anderson was not available to make a presentation to the Senate.*
  - Dr. Verma stated he would ask for Dr. Anderson to send a representative when she is unable to attend.

❖ **Report from Dr. Stephen Nix:**

- *Dr. Nix presented an update on the College of Engineering to the Faculty Senate.*
  - Dr. Nix provided a six-page snapshot of the activity of the College of Engineering he uses when he presents at various events, pointing out a few key items such as program sizes and enrollment growth within the college.
  - He stated the College of Engineering is the largest college on campus based on campus majors. Undergraduate and graduate enrollment has increased and Dr. Nix is very proud of the undergraduate growth.
  - The faculty has grown as well with 84 members in the college. Dr. Nix is proud of the pedigree that new faculty members are bringing to the college.
  - ABET accreditation occurred and it was the most successful one yet.

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- The Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering is a program that used to be on campus and the College is working to bring it back. New programs were listed on the snapshot handout with their statuses.
- The Rio Grande Valley Engineering Initiative is currently underway with a small cohort, with courses taught at the MITC in Harlingen as well as the Citrus Center in Weslaco. This program has received a lot of attention and hopes to grow to 15 academic programs. The College of Education has been located there for a while now with 300 students. The College of Agriculture is located there as well. Dr. Nix hopes the plan to build an academic campus there is not another birthing plan as this campus has done in the past.
- Dr. Nix also stated the new PhD in Sustainable Energy Systems Engineering program started this fall semester. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is not fond of approving doctoral programs to regional universities. It was a bit of effort getting it approved. It serves a small group of students but they are anticipating 6 more students in the spring semester.
- Eagle Ford Center for Research, Education, and Outreach (EFCREO) has recently hired a new Executive Director as well as received the Chancellor's Research Initiative award, which attracted the director.
- Dr. Nix stated the big goal he has for the college is to have a more stable and adjusted enrollment. The college currently has large graduate and low undergraduate enrollment. The goal is to have 2/3 in undergraduate and 1/3 in graduate student enrollment.
- Another goal is to build the research capacity of the college. They have done this with the two doctoral programs and the EFCREO. Having students work on theses has also helped.
- Another goal mentioned was the creation of more endowed chairs.
- **Dr. Nix opened the floor for any questions:**
  - Dr. Kathleen Rees asked if the BS in Industrial Engineering had gone to the THECB yet.
  - Dr. Nix replied that it had not.
  - Dr. Polly Allred asked why the college does not offer a minor in Engineering.
  - Dr. Nix stated that there are a lot of prerequisites for the courses, so it is not impossible but difficult. They will consider developing a minor in the future, and there is not a reason not to.
  - It was asked (under the continuous improvement section on the last page of the handout) about the electronic devices in exams policy.
  - Dr. Nix stated that there were some issues with cellphones and the college has implemented a policy of no electronic devices to counter it.
- With no more questions, Dr. Verma thanked Dr. Nix for his presentation.

## ❖ Report from Committees and Officers:

- Faculty Senate President Update - Dr. Verma
  - *Dr. Verma stated that he has not been able to meet with the President or the Provost due to scheduling conflicts.*

## ❖ Old Business:

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- *Dr. Verma opened the floor for old business items.*
- Motion to accept draft SRI from SRI Committee:
  - Dr. Verma stated that a senator contacted them stating that they would arrive late to the meeting at around 4:00 p.m. He asked if the Senate would like to hold off until that time. He also asked Dr. Nestor Sherman to clarify parliamentary procedure.
    - Dr. Sherman stated that a motion would need to be made.
    - It was stated that a motion as made at the subsequent meeting
  - Dr. Verma asked if there was a motion to proceed. The motion was made by Dr. Ryan Paul and seconded by Dr. Elizabeth Janzen. The senate then moved into new business.

## ❖ **New Business:**

- *Dr. Verma opened the floor for new business items.*
- Amendment to the promotion guidelines from Faculty Handbook Committee:
- *Dr. Maria Ayala-Schueneman stated that the committee was charged with making sure all months are counted. The suggested text for section 6(b) for Academic Personnel Policies B4.1 Principles was handed out and read out loud. The handbook would read as follows:*
  - *“6(b) An associate professor may become eligible for review to full professor in the faculty member’s fifth year in rank. The evaluation period for promotion to professor is from the date of portfolio submission for associate professor to the date of portfolio submission for full professor, except in the case of a faculty member hired at the associate professor rank. In the latter case, the evaluation period for promotion to professor is from the date of appointment to the date the faculty member submits his/her materials for review. The material used in the evaluation process from assistant professor to associate professor (including for any appeal) may not be included in the evaluation process for promotion from associate to full professor.*
  - Dr. Nestor Sherman stated there needs to be a motion, to which Dr. Richard Miller made a motion which was seconded, and the Senate was then in discussion.
  - Dr. Sherman asked if an Associate Professor coming in from somewhere else where they were an Associate and hired as an Associate was allowed to use documents from the other school. It was agreed that the wording sounds like they could not.
  - It was asked could an individual use documents from other institutions to obtain an Associate Rank.
    - It was stated that when the person is eligible for promotion is negotiable on their date of hire which can vary.
  - Discussion commenced regarding a missing year for promotion to Assistant to Associate. Since this vote pertained to promotion from

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Associate to Professor, the committee was not aware of a missing year in that area. If the issue is there as well, it will be addressed as a motion later.

- It was stated that you cannot count documentation twice so the faculty member will need to decide if they want the information to count for Associate to Full Professor and any appeal.
- It was requested to remove the following section:
  - *The evaluation period for promotion to professor is from the date of portfolio submission for associate professor to the date of portfolio submission for full professor, ~~except in the case of a faculty member hired at the associate professor rank. In the latter case, the evaluation period for promotion to professor is from the date of appointment to the date the faculty member submits his/her materials for review.~~*
- A motion was made to accept the proposed amended text. The motion was seconded by Dr. Rajab Chaloo.
- It was asked when this change would come into effect. It was stated that there is a written policy to make changes that the Faculty Senate has not followed in the past few year. The guidelines, located on the Faculty Senate webpage, stated those proposals need to be submitted to the Senate by November 1<sup>st</sup>. It was stated that the proposal should be given to the Executive Committee by then to be presented to the Senate in the spring semester. It was stated that people were not aware and some were confused. An option to suspend the rules in order to entertain the idea was mentioned since the item was presented in November. It was asked if there was a motion to suspend the November 1<sup>st</sup> deadline rule to allow the committee to give the proposal to the Executive Committee for presentation to the Senate in the spring.
- A motion to withdraw the original motion was made by Dr. Ayala-Schueneman. The motion was seconded by Dr. Sherman. The motion carried unanimously.
- A motion was made by Dr. Kathleen Rees to suspend the rules to accommodate the promotion draft. The motion was seconded. The motion carried unanimously.
- SRI Committee – SRI Draft
- *Dr. Verma informed the Senate that a secret ballot would take place for this vote.*
  - A motion to remove off the table was made by Dr. Nestor Sherman. The motion was seconded by Dr. Richard Miller. The motion carried unanimously.
  - A motion to accept the SRI draft presented by the SRI Committee was made and seconded.
  - It was asked what it would mean to approve this draft. It was stated if the vote is yes that a committee would be formed for the rollout. The

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SRI would not be available until probably 2017 as a standalone method. Accepting the draft would not mean the survey will be implemented in full force. A Committee will have to try and test it as it has not been tested. The survey cannot be tested unless approved. A Faculty Senate committee would work on implementation. It was also stated that accepting the draft would not mean the draft would be given out this spring semester. A Committee will come back to the Senate with data and a recommend implementation policy. This would not be back to the Senate till Fall 2016.

- It was asked if senators were still voting on the survey questions, to which it was replied in the affirmative.
- It was stated that the methodology needs to be checked and questions regarding the development of the survey questions were asked.
  - It was replied that the committee will work in good faith to evaluate the long process.
  - Information on the previous committee work was stated. It was stated that the current SRI instrument is not being used as intended according to the 1999 implementation guidelines. It was stated that the committee has to start from somewhere and new guidelines can't be developed until there is a product.
- Discussion regarding evaluation and implementation continued with concerns expressed including a lack of implementation plan in place during this approval and issues with promotion and tenure
  - It was stated that these concerns are valid but this vote is not for implementation and the earliest it would be implemented would be 2017.
- It was asked if the Senate was focusing on the right target.
  - It was stated that the committee who worked on the current SRI was not charged to evaluate.
- Concern was expressed again over where the survey questions came from and what research determined these questions.
  - Dr. Richard Miller, who was on the previous committee, stated that the committee did not make up the initial questions and did look at research for them although they have been amended and changed in Senate.
- It was stated that section 4 on the draft was voted on and passed in September. It was stated that because procedure was not followed it was now invalid.
- Concern was expressed that if this SRI draft is rejected than yet another committee would be formed, that would run into the same issues. It was stated that the Senate has a history of not following through on issues.
- Discussion ended and clarification was given regarding the exact nature of the vote. The vote would be to accept the draft and the draft would be given to a new committee in charge of evaluation and

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implementation. A secret ballot was given and results were counted by two senators.

- The election results are as followed:
  - 15 – Yes
  - 13 – No
  - The motion passed with 15 votes.

## ❖ **Announcements:**

- *Dr. Verma opened the floor for various committees to give an update.*
  - Election Committee – Dr. McLauchlan:
    - It was stated there are four vacancies currently which are Mechanical Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, and Biology. Departments have been contacted to hold elections.
  - Senior Faculty Investment – Dr. Richard Miller:
    - It stated the proposal was sent to the President. The Senate has already seen what was submitted in previous meeting. They did send 2 recommendations regarding summer salary cap and salary compression.
  - Discussion on moving Senate to a virtual office and handling old paper documents:
    - Dr. Verma stated he and Abigail De La Mora met with iTech regarding obtaining a web space to have documents scanned and saved electronically. The Senate will move to electronic filing.
    - How to handle old documents was also discussed. Currently copies of all ballots, tally sheets, and envelopes are being kept. The constitution states the Senate only needs to keep the tally sheets. Two boxes containing the ballots are taking up space that the Senate does not have. It was discussed to keep the ballots for a certain amount of time (2 or 4 weeks after election) and then the election committee chair can shred ballots and keep the tally sheets. It was decided to shred old ballots one month after the election.
  - Discussion on potential change in Senate meeting schedules, and work load and expectations from Senators, and honoring the clauses for course release for faculty:
  - Setting up a working group to study the current faculty constitution and suggest changes: Dr. Verma mentioned a possible working group to be developed for updating the constitution. He stated it was time to work on a policy and procedure manual.
    - It was asked if there were bylaws to which Dr. Verma replied he would locate those.
    - It was stated there is already a clause regarding faculty members doing work above and beyond. Many faculty members are already doing this type of work with no release time.

## ❖ **Adjournment:**

- *Dr. Verma stated the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2016.*
- With no further items, the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.