

Student Academic & Financial Affairs Committee

October 06, 2008

Minutes of Meeting

Present: Greg Corso (Psych), Patty Sobecky (Biol), Augustine Esogbue (ISYE), Reta Pikowsky (Registrar), Susan Burns (CEE).

Absent: Mo Li (MSE), Ruperto Perez (Counseling Center), Kristie Champlin (undergraduate student rep), Carl Yerger (grad student rep), Tyler Jackson (undergraduate student rep).
Guest : None

The meeting was called to order by Augustine Esogbue, the new Chair at 2:00PM, in the J.S. Coon building, Room 148. The minutes of the August meeting were distributed and gone over with all present. Finding a meeting time that was suitable to all continues to be a challenge. The agenda was (i) continuing feedback on the student attendance results, (ii) student evaluations of course/instructor raised by Mo Li last Spring, (iii) first general faculty/academic senate meeting for the Fall semester, and (iv) matters arising.

The Committee reviewed again the findings of the survey on class attendance and felt satisfied with the findings. It was decided that the results by and large reflected expectations and that the number of respondents was sufficient to reach the findings obtained. It was agreed that not much would be gained by seeking additional respondents especially to justify the extra cost.

Augustine reported that there was a requirement for the Committee's report to be presented at the forthcoming General Faculty/Faculty Senate meeting scheduled for October 21 st from 2-4pm. He indicated that he would be out of the country on that date and sought volunteers to present the report on behalf of SAFAC. Susan Burns was to check her schedule and availability and inform Augustine.

The Committee took up two issues raised by Reta, the Registrar, since our last meeting that had to do with Excused Absences. The Committee was reminded that the Institute policy states inter alia: "Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities(such as field trips and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar". The Committee discussed the case with the Athletic Department that occasionally sought excuses for travel earlier than scheduled event meeting times for practice purposes as a grey area where reasonableness was required and felt that Reta would generally obtain event and travel schedules before deciding the request's appropriateness.

A second issue dealt with an inquiry from the Dean of Students who had rejected a student's request for an excuse letter to enable the student travel to Egypt to attend a veterinary conference during the semester. His argument was that this was not a Tech sanctioned event. A quick response was sought from the committee whether to confirm the Dean's position of denial or grant it. After much debate back and forth, the committee recommended obtaining additional input on the student's academic standing generally. When it was verified that the student was a good student and would not fall behind because of his absence, the Committee recommended approval recommended approval.

The Committee also took up the question of student course/instructor surveys and felt it would benefit from more in dept discussion. The subject of an apparent disparity in the constraints on students on financial aid working for extra pay as it applies to both graduate and undergraduate students was raised. It was decided to put that on the list of items to consider in future Committee issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05pm