

Faculty Senate Minutes

November 24, 2009

4:00 PM

Officers Present: Randy Jarvis, Veronica Rodriguez, Mark Murray, Tim Weber, Howard Price

Senators Present: Iris Rios, Rosemary Reich-Hildebrandt, Saeed Molki, Matthew Trotter, William Macintosh, Eric Reittinger, Michael Polinard, Mychal Odom, Lily Rai, Bruce Griffiths, Michael Grub, Elizabeth Burris, Sharon Rice, Andres (Alex) Garza, Rene Zuniga, Patricia Blaine

Additional Faculty Present: Cynthia Baldwin, Larry McElvain, Merrie Van Loy

Guests: Paul Hernandez , Jorge Solis, David Plummer, Paul Varville

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM by Randy Jarvis, President.
2. Bill Macintosh made a motion to approve the October minutes. Bruce Griffiths seconded. The motion passed.
3. Paul Hernandez and Jorge Solis presented information regarding ADA policy and procedures. At the college level, students with disabilities must self-identify each semester with the college's ADA office. There are currently around 250 students who have done so. Recommendations are then made, based on various evaluations and previous recommendations. The student is responsible to present the recommendations to the instructor. Accommodations only have to be made from the time the student presents this to the instructor. Federal guidelines give wide latitude indicating just that the instructor must make "reasonable accommodations." If the student specifically requests an accommodation that seems unreasonable, contact the student's ADA counselor, and work with them. They will usually side with the instructor where something seems unreasonable. Students who do not present their list of ADA accommodations are to be treated just as any other student. (Instructors do receive email notification of students in their classes who have documented disabilities with the ADA office, but the accommodations are not listed.) The ADA department encourages instructors to provide the minimum accommodations needed, and instructors should only provide those that the student indicates that they really need. Sometimes not all those listed are really needed.

Mark Murray brought up a situation in which an art instructor was asked to describe each piece of artwork for a visually impaired student. This seemed an unreasonable (maybe impossible) request,

and would have taken so much time that the quality of the course would have been impaired. Paul indicated that the department wants to staff cases like this and can often provide options that instructors may not be aware of. For example, in this case a note-taker could be provided who could describe the artwork to the student. Iris Rios noted that accommodating students demands extra attention from the instructor and may reduce attention to the rest of the class. Are there just some courses that are not appropriate for students with some disabilities? Paul responded that we cannot discourage students from taking certain courses or programs, but we can make them aware of the barriers or obstacles they will face therein.

Merrie Van Loy said that she had a student who had received a Special Education high school diploma. She was not aware of it, and could have helped the student more, had she known. Paul indicated that it is the student's responsibility to self-identify, and faculty need not accommodate in situations such as this. Mychal Odom commented that based on his familiarity with this there may be some that do not self-identify, but you can sometimes pick them out who needs help. There may be learning disorders or other concerns that the student doesn't even realize they have. According to Paul, if a faculty member thinks that a student might have an undiscovered disability, they can refer them to the counseling office. From there, they may be referred for additional testing and possible diagnosis by an MD or Licensed Psychologist. (Side note: faculty should never try to diagnose disabilities themselves or tell the student that they have a disability. Leave that up to professionals who are licensed to do so.)

Iris Rios asked what to do if the recommendations specify a resource that is not currently available, such as a textbook in alternate format for a visually impaired student, which was not available on campus at the time. In this case, it may be appropriate to suggest that the student postpone taking that class until the resource can be obtained.

4. Randy Jarvis, Veronica Rodriguez and Eric Reittinger from faculty senate have been serving on the parking committee. They have asked David Plummer and Paul Varville to come in and speak with the senate. David Plummer presented a Powerpoint presentation on plans to address current parking issues and accommodate future growth. On the Pecan campus, 300 additional spaces are being added on the south side of Pecan, where the trailer park used to be. An addition 600 spaces will go in $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile west of campus, toward Sonic. At NAH, there will be an additional 96 between the NAH building and the Milagro Clinic. On the other campuses, they think parking will be OK through 2010. At Mid-Valley parking will be tight during high volume times, but a temporary overflow lot is being planned to handle extra needs, such as at the beginning of semester.

Regarding Faculty parking, according to HR's numbers we have enough spaces. When it comes to the gated parking lots at Pecan, the director of operations evaluates the number of spaces and who should use them. Randy Jarvis will work with George McCaleb on this issue. Mychal Odom commented that maybe carpooling could relieve some of the parking congestion.

We have twice the number of handicapped spaces as are required by ADA guidelines. On the Pecan campus, nine more spaces will be added south of Building J. Due to abuse of handicapped spaces McAllen PD now will come in and enforce them. They seized six improperly possessed handicapped hangers and gave out 22 tickets the week before this meeting. Mark Murray asked about inclusion of handicapped spaces in the gated and faculty area.

On the Pecan campus, problems with cars blocking traffic to drop off and pick up students have been addressed. Safety issues are being addressed. A pedestrian tunnel or bridge for crossing Pecan has been added to the master plan. The use of fencing or other barriers to keep students on sidewalks rather than college driveways is also being implemented. They are working with the city to adjust the timing of the traffic lights to improve pedestrian safety when crossing Pecan.

A shuttle is being planned to move people between Pecan Plaza and the Pecan campus. The shuttle may be extended to serve the lot that is going in west of the Pecan campus. Matthew Trotter expressed concerns regarding the safety of faculty and students who might have to walk to the remote lot after night classes, if there is not a shuttle running at that time. Paul Varville indicated that all the lots will be staffed with security, but hours have yet to be determined, as well as the timing and routes of the shuttles.

In regard to charging a parking fee, this issue has been tabled as the parking committee works on other issues.

Questions were raised about student complaints that, at the beginning of the semester, entrances were blocked when there were some empty parking spaces. Paul Varville explained the procedures being used to smooth parking and why this might occasionally happen.

5. Tim Weber reported on the nomination of Victor Gomez for the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation Award. He thanked Mychal Odom, Jerry Inmon, and Benito Garza for their work in serving on the committee. He suggested that in future years we promote the nomination process more to get greater faculty involvement.
6. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Weber