

## Senate Report for the General Faculty Meeting

August 23, 2017

President Turner, Provost Currall, Deans and members of the faculty, it is a great honor to welcome you today and to serve as the President of the Faculty Senate for the coming academic year. I would like to extend special greetings to Stephanie Knight, Dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development, Matt Myers, Dean of the Cox School of Business, Elizabeth Killingsworth, Dean and Director *ad interim* of Central University Libraries, and K.C. Mmeje, Vice President for Student Affairs. I have had the opportunity to work closely with Dean Killingsworth over the summer and will continue to do so throughout the year. If you haven't already, you can get acquainted with her as well at the faculty reception in the Texana room at the Fondren Library immediately following this meeting. I also look forward to working with Deans Knight and Myers and Dr. Mmeje this year, and would like to personally welcome all of you to SMU.

I anticipate an active and productive year for the University. I am invigorated for the task ahead by the momentum developed by the Senate in many areas during the previous year.

Details of the Senate activities from the previous semester can be found in the report prepared by Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, available in your booklet. You will see the Senate has been involved in a number of areas. I would like to highlight three, as they pertain most closely to the ongoing work of the Faculty Senate.

First, a resolution sponsored by Professor Rajat Deb, Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries, was passed in February. The resolution called for increasing support for Central University Libraries to levels necessary for joining the Association of Research Libraries within the next five years. This resolution was presented to the Board of Trustees at the Academic Affairs Committee meeting and at the full Board meeting in February.

Second, in April, Rebekah Miles, Chair of the Committee on Research and Graduate Education introduced a resolution supporting a Provost Task Force on Ph.D. Education, which was approved by the Senate. The task force would also consider other terminal academic degrees such as Masters of Fine Arts and would be charged with considering "in a comprehensive way steps to improve" these programs including increased financial support, support for affordable health insurance, support for graduate student recruitment, waivers for full tuition and fees for PhD students in all programs across the University, and more independent teaching opportunities.

Finally, during the very last meeting of the Senate last semester the Senate created an Ad Hoc Committee on Non-Tenure Line Faculty through a resolution presented by Abby Pruitt. The committee was recognized as an important need to investigate job-related concerns of non-tenure line faculty across campus, seeking ways to support and promote the contributions and career aspirations of an invaluable cohort in our faculty ranks.

These three resolutions from last semester underscore the emphasis of the Senate and faculty on the advancement of academic excellence at SMU and support for our faculty colleagues across campus.

The activities of the Senate didn't cease at the procession of the graduates through the Rotunda in May, however. I can assure you the Senate Executive Committee has been very busy over the summer. At this time, I would like to ask the Executive Committee to stand.

We have a strong and cohesive Executive Committee that will work tirelessly for you in the coming year. I know this because we have already been involved with a range of issues this summer. Early in the summer, Jeanne, Dayna, and I represented the Senate in interviews for two top-level administrative positions. These searches were completed earlier this summer and we are pleased to welcome Larenda Mielke as the new Associate Provost for Continuing Education and Michael Hites as the incoming Chief Information Officer.

To investigate student health insurance costs, a key financial concern for our graduate students, there were several meetings with Reva Pollack, Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, including a joint meeting with Dr. Randy Jones, Associate Dean of Health Services, and Angela Warfield, the Student Health Insurance Coordinator. Information from these meetings was discussed with the Executive Committee and Provost Currall, seeking ways to improve support for our graduate students.

This summer we also received notice that the Office of Civil Rights approved SMU's revised policy 2.5.1 on Sexual Harassment. While correlation is not causation, it is nevertheless noteworthy (or serendipitous) that this announcement came shortly after Vicki Palacios and I had a joint meeting with Samantha Thomas, Executive Director for Access and Equity and Title IX Coordinator, and Susan Howe and Kelly Thurman from the Office of Legal Affairs regarding concerns the Senate had with the original interim policy 2.5.1. They ably explained the long and complex history of this policy. We are glad to see the policy revision process come to a resolution with the acceptance of the revised policy. The Senate will be directing the Ethics and Tenure Committee to review the revised policy and ensure that it addresses concerns of the Senate regarding fairness and transparency to both parties involved in Sexual Harassment cases and improved procedural efficiency.

Finally, I would like to mention the ongoing work of the Task Force on the Future of Libraries, which was created by Provost Currall this summer to consider organizational changes to the University libraries that may enhance cohesion and coordination of the libraries across campus. As the faculty representative on this committee, it has been enjoyable to work with Dean Killingsworth, directors of university libraries across campus, and other passionate library personnel. To ensure the diversity of faculty interests were well represented in the discussion, we sent out a survey to the Faculty Senate, the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries, and the library committees for the Bridwell and Underwood libraries. I can assure you that your voices have been heard and the task force is mindful of the services expected by patrons of the libraries. The report of the task force will be delivered to Provost Currall by September 1.

Looking forward to the coming year, I would like to draw from a story to set the stage for the tasks ahead. The story comes from my own “tradition”, namely aeronautics, and is told by retired Air Force Maj. Brian Shul in his book Sled Driver about his experiences as an SR-71 pilot.

I’ve modified the story some to “fit in the allotted time”. It begins with Maj. Shul and his Reconnaissance Systems Officer (RSO) Walt Watson speeding along miles above Southern California when they hear a radio transmission from a small Cessna plane. The Cessna pilot was likely a student pilot, just trying to get some information to help with flight planning. In Maj. Shul’s words:

“The predominant radio chatter was from Los Angeles Center, far below us, controlling daily traffic in their sector...

We listened as the shaky voice of a lone Cessna pilot asked Center for a readout of his ground speed. Center replied: “November Charlie 175, I’m showing you at ninety knots on the ground.”...

Just moments after the Cessna’s inquiry, a Twin Beech piped up on frequency, in a rather superior tone, asking for his ground speed. “I have you at one hundred and twenty-five knots of ground speed.” Boy, I thought, the Beechcraft really must think he is dazzling his Cessna brethren. Then out of the blue, a navy F-18 pilot out of NAS Lemoore came up on frequency. You knew right away it was a Navy jock because he sounded very cool on the radios. “Center, Dusty 52 ground speed check”. Before Center could reply, I’m thinking to myself, hey, Dusty 52 has a ground speed indicator in that million-dollar cockpit, so why is he asking Center for a readout? Then I got it, ol’ Dusty here is making sure that every bug smasher from Mount Whitney to the Mojave knows what true speed is. He’s the fastest dude in the valley today, and he just wants everyone to know how much fun he is having in his new Hornet. And the reply, always with that same, calm, voice, with more distinct alliteration than emotion: “Dusty 52, Center, we have you at 620 on the ground.”

And I thought to myself, is this a ripe situation, or what? As my hand instinctively reached for the mic button, I had to remind myself that Walt was in control of the radios. Still, I thought, it must be done – in mere seconds we’ll be out of the sector and the opportunity will be lost...

Then, I heard it. The click of the mic button from the back seat. That was the very moment that I knew Walter and I had become a crew. Very professionally, and with no emotion, Walter spoke: “Los Angeles Center, Aspen 20, can you give us a ground speed check?” There was no hesitation, and the reply came as if it was an everyday request. “Aspen 20, I show you at one thousand eight hundred and forty-two knots, across the ground.”

I think it was the forty-two knots that I liked the best, so accurate and proud was Center to deliver that information without hesitation, and you just knew he was smiling. But the precise point at which I knew that Walt and I were going to be really good friends for a long time was

when he keyed the mic once again to say, in his most fighter-pilot-like voice: “Ah, Center, much thanks, we’re showing closer to nineteen hundred on the money.”

For a moment Walter was a god. And we finally heard a little crack in the armor of the Houston Center voice, when L.A. came back with, “Roger that Aspen, your equipment is probably more accurate than ours. You boys have a good one.”

The story is a humorous piece of aviation lore, popular among aviation enthusiasts. I repeat it here because it provides a light-hearted illustration of what you need if you want to be a top performer, the fastest bird in the sky, so to speak. There are three key pieces.

First, you need outstanding pilots. Maj. Shul had years of experience flying for the Air Force, and specialized training required to fly the SR-71. Likewise, at SMU we have a long tradition of recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty. It has been my privilege for the past 15 years to work beside you in various capacities across campus.

But having outstanding pilots isn’t enough. Maj. Shul, with all his training, couldn’t make the Beech twin or even the F-18 fly at 1900 knots. You must **also** have the best equipment. The air traffic controller said it himself. In the academic setting, having access to the best resources is essential for academic excellence.

Finally, there is Air Traffic Control. Often there is the perception that ATC functions as a gate keeper or sky marshal, but the actual function of ATC is to facilitate safe and efficient flow of air traffic by communicating with the pilots and providing resources (such as radar service) generally unavailable to the pilots. The pilot decides where to go and ATC facilitates the journey. In Maj. Shul’s story, ATC fulfills this crucial function admirably (and joins in the fun along the way).

The lessons of this story ring true for us in the coming year. Last May I conducted a survey of the Senate to assess priorities of the faculty. At the top of the list were increased resources and support for research, faculty, and graduate students. This year the Senate will work toward addressing these concerns, with emphasis in the following areas, among others:

- 1) Following recommendations of the Committee on Research and Graduate Education, we will seek full health insurance coverage for graduate students pursuing terminal academic degrees. We will also promote expanded fellowship support for graduate students. Coverage of health insurance expenses for graduate students is common place at our aspirant institutions, as is a broad range of fellowship options providing full financial support. Both are important resources for recruiting and retaining the best graduate students.
- 2) We will continue to promote increasing financial support for our libraries to levels appropriate for a top-tier university. A strong library is foundational for excellent scholarship, but SMU’s library resources, in terms of both staffing and budget for materials, lags well behind libraries ranked in the Association of Research Libraries and

is even well below the mean values for schools ranked 40 – 50 in U.S. News and World Report. Our support for SMU libraries must be commensurate with our aspirations.

- 3) As noted in Prof. Stevenson-Moessner's report, last year the University Research Council received an infusion of an additional \$100,000 through the leadership of Pres. Turner. These funds were greatly appreciated and utilized by many faculty, but additional funding is needed. For a total faculty of approximately 800, much more funding is needed to adequately support the broad travel and seed project funding interests of our diverse faculty. Such funds will have a measureable effect through increased scholarship and increased extramural grant awards.

As we look forward, the challenge is great. We must be strategic, but we **CANNOT** be timid.

In the coming weeks, you will have an opportunity to speak directly with "Air Traffic Control". Provost Currall will be addressing the Senate on September 6 at 3:30 p.m. He will be seeking to open a dialog about the recent task force reports and efforts to promote academic excellence. Pres. Turner will be addressing the Senate the following month on October 4 at 3:30 p.m. Both meetings will be in Hughes-Trigg Ballroom West. Our meetings are open and you are welcome to attend. Additional invited speakers will be addressing the Senate and the schedule will be posted on the Senate website as it becomes available.

But if you can't make it to the Senate meetings, make sure you contact your Senator and ask him or her to raise any questions or concerns you have.

Senators are listed in your booklet and the Faculty Senate website will be updated with the current roster in the next week or two. They will also be easily recognizable by these identifying pins.

Additionally, we are privileged to have faculty representation on the Board of Trustees Committees. I have included your committee representatives on the next slides and would like to ask any who are present to stand.

There is much to do, but your Senate and Board of Trustees representatives will be working hard to make sure you can excel in your research and teaching, **flying high and fast in the year ahead.**