

Senate Report for the General Faculty Meeting

January 24, 2018

President Turner, Provost Currall, Deans, Members of the Faculty, and Guests,

Toward the end of the Fall semester, we were informed of the passing of Ruth Altshuler, long-time Board of Trustees member and benefactor to both SMU and the Dallas-Ft. Worth community. Before I begin my report, I would like to honor her with a moment of silence... Thank you.

It has been a busy year so far for the Senate. I would like to especially recognize the Senate committees and their chairs, most of whom are doing far more work than I had anticipated at the beginning of the year.

I would also like to recognize Vicki Palacios. She has served faithfully on the Executive Committee, but has stepped down from this role and taken a leave of absence for personal reasons. I would like to thank her for her service. Grant Hayden has replaced her on the ExCom and we look forward to working with Grant in this role.

Looking forward to this semester, I'd like to briefly mention a few guests that will be attending Senate meetings, which are listed on this slide. Additional guests will be announced as they are scheduled.

As we anticipate upcoming initiatives requiring Senate input or a vote, I'd like to point out a recent addition we made to the Senate website. You can now access a list of Senators sorted according to electoral unit. This will assist you in finding your Senators so you know who is representing you and voting for you.

Turning to the Senate activities of the past semester, these are outlined in your booklet. I would like to highlight several today.

Over the summer and during the beginning of the Fall semester, the Senate worked to finalize the presentation and implementation of a resolution passed last Spring to expand the applicability of the first-year repeat policy. This revision is intended to provide additional opportunities for success to students who may be experiencing challenges for a variety of reasons. The recommended policy changes have been adopted and the policy renamed the Grade Replacement Repeat Policy since it now applies to all students. The new policy is effective for courses taken Fall 2017 or later.

During the deliberations on this policy change, the Senate worked with the provost's office to clarify the relative roles of the Faculty Senate (specifically through the Academic Policies Committee) and the provost's Educational Programs Council (EPC) in providing input on general academic policies. While both bodies consider academic matters, the EPC is an advisory council to the provost. Resolutions from the Faculty Senate, on the other hand, bear the full support of

the General Faculty. To clarify these roles, a flow chart was developed indicating, in part, that Senate resolutions do not require an additional vote by the EPC.

The clarified procedure, which is available on the Senate website, will smooth the implementation of academic resolutions passed by the Senate and ensure the proper execution of the roles of each participant in the process. It is also important to keep the fundamental role played by the Senate in academic and curricular matters in mind moving forward. The General Education Task Force has been hard at work on a revised and refined Common Curriculum. As noted earlier, Assoc. Prov. Peter Moore will be discussing progress on the Common Curriculum with the Senate at its meeting on February 21, allowing opportunity for Senate input and deliberation before approval by the Senate in 2019. It is important to keep this dialog in place since many of the modifications and exemptions to the 2010 University Curriculum were made without the approval of the General Faculty, either as a whole or by a committee elected by the faculty. Looking forward, the academic environment is encouraging non-traditional curricular modalities, including interdisciplinary courses and majors, and distance education platforms. In this environment, it is important to maintain the essential oversight of faculty on curricular matters, while still remaining flexible to changes in the academic landscape. The Senate will be monitoring developments in these areas and working to ensure that appropriate oversight is in place.

Late in last Spring and over the summer, the Senate engaged in a dialog with the president's and provost's offices regarding faculty salary equity. Beginning this semester, Assoc. Prov. Doug Reinelt will lead a committee composed of six faculty, with three members selected by the Senate. The committee will perform annual or bi-annual quantitative analysis of faculty salary data to identify gender and race/ethnicity based salary inequities and recommend actions for remediation. It is important to have thorough, quantitative, and systematic analysis of salary inequities to ensure freedom from prejudice and the economic well-being of the faculty. The Senate is pleased to work with the provost's office through shared governance to support this initiative.

At the Fall General Faculty meeting, I noted that SMU libraries are an important priority for the Senate this year. That continues to be the case with a number of developments last semester and more to come in the Spring. In November the provost released the report from the Task Force on the Future of Libraries at SMU together with a statement on changes to the future organizational structure of the libraries. The changes include the key task force recommendation to institute a collaborative council to streamline the interaction between libraries and provide a stronger and more uniform user experience across libraries. Additionally, the reporting structure of the Business, Bridwell, and Underwood library directors will be changed with the Business and Bridwell library directors now having a direct report to the new Dean of SMU Libraries and the Underwood library director have a "dotted line" report to the new dean. While the full implications of the changes in the reporting structure of the library directors is somewhat unclear, Provost Currall emphasized during a December meeting with the Senate that support for individual libraries will not be reduced under this structure.

Changes to the organizational structure of the libraries will be implemented with the new Dean of SMU Libraries, for which a search is currently underway. The Faculty Senate is represented on the search through Tim Rosendale, chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries, and Grant Hayden (whom you met earlier).

An ongoing and pressing concern is the financial support of the libraries, particularly Central University Libraries. In my Fall address I noted our funding support for SMU libraries is well below our aspirations. This semester the seriousness of the situation has been highlighted to the Senate by the fact that at current funding levels the library will not be able to maintain its “big deal” access to Elsevier journal titles, which will expire the end of this calendar year. As a result, the library is now assessing which journal subscriptions to cancel. Funding levels have not kept pace with inflation on periodicals, and purchases of books and other materials are now possible only through endowment funding. It’s not an understatement to say that the situation is urgent. In recognition of this, Tim Rosendale, CUL Dean Killingsworth, and I met with Provost Currall in December to discuss options for quickly and dramatically improving the funding situation for the libraries. There are viable options with various levels of impact and time to implement, but we must act quickly. This is a high priority item for the faculty and it should be for the University as well. The Senate will continue to work with the provost and Dean Killingsworth and her successor to monitor the financial health of the libraries and advocate for adequate support for this essential academic resource.

During my Fall address, I also advocated for increased academic support, both to faculty and to graduate students. To this end, last semester the Senate drafted and approved a budget request to fund health insurance for all Ph.D., MFA, and SJD students. Graduate students, particularly those pursuing terminal academic degrees, are essential for advancing the scholarly and creative impact of the University, yet their funds are severely limited, making it challenging to absorb the increasing costs of health insurance. This financial burden not only places undue hardship on our students, but also places us at a competitive disadvantage compared to both our aspirant and peer institutions. In addition to this request to support our students, the Senate also submitted a priority request for an additional \$100,000/year to be added to the URC budget, to supplement recent increases in this funding pool. Both requests were included in the budget request to the provost from Dean Jim Quick. Budget decisions will be finalized by mid-February. While the budget always represents a compromise among many competing and worthy interests, it is important that these requests for support where resources are limited receive full consideration.

Finally, I would like to address a topic that has been a point of discussion in various forms for over a year, namely, enhancing the academic profile and stature of SMU. Starting in the Fall 2016 term, Provost Currall organized a campus wide evaluation of these matters with three task forces. The process continued this semester with the release of the task force reports and an overview document entitled “Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU”, which was provided as a starting point for campus-wide discussion.

The Senate has been actively engaged in the discussion throughout last semester and into January. This included an overview with Provost Currall at our very first meeting in September and an open forum with him in December. I also asked the Student Polices Committee and the Committee on Research and Graduate Education to review the documents and provide feedback on perspectives relevant to their committees. Finally, earlier in January I formed two smaller ad hoc committees to provide brief but targeted feedback on areas that may serve as key differentiators for SMU, namely, Data Science and Computing, interdisciplinary programs and research, and development of an “innovation and creativity quad” on East Campus. The reports from all four committees have been provided to Provost Currall and will be posted on the Senate website.

A great deal of very valuable input was received from these efforts. I would like to share some of the common themes:

1. Graduate programs and graduate students are essential elements of academic excellence. We must work to enhance the quality of academic programs, both traditional and interdisciplinary. We must likewise increase support for graduate students in terms of recruiting, financial support while they are here, and professional development services for supporting their future careers.
2. There must be an appropriate balance between STEM fields and humanistic and creative disciplines in identifying and supporting academic excellence. All fields across campus support the academic enterprise and contribute to the overall stature of the university, but they do not all do so in precisely the same ways. These differences should not lead to preference or support for one over the other. Indeed, collaborative and bold interdisciplinary initiatives should be supported and promoted as they engender innovation and provide recognition.
3. There are important and valuable opportunities for new interdisciplinary programs and initiatives, such as Data Science. We must be flexible enough to recognize these opportunities, and lead in the creation of new programs and research disciplines. Such efforts must be adequately supported with faculty lines, finances, and administrative support.
4. Additional support and resources are required for the Office of Research Administration and the Dean of Graduate Studies Office. Increasing creative and scholarly activities requires increasing financial and administrative support for such activities through these offices. A key consideration is whether or not SMU should create a graduate school with general oversight of PhD programs, as is common in many top-tier institutions. An appropriately structured graduate school would provide needed support for graduate programs and necessary tools for administering interdisciplinary programs, to name a few advantages. Efforts are currently underway in Dean Quick’s office and the Senate to evaluate the opportunities and requirements for a graduate school at SMU.
5. It is important to not only do, but also to tell. As such we must work to improve our public outreach and marketing as public perception is integral to recognition of academic excellence.
6. East Campus represents a powerful opportunity. We must work to develop and utilize this resource in ways that provide sustained, interdisciplinary opportunities for

creativity and innovation while providing meaningful interaction with the surrounding community.

This represents a cross-section of some of the ideas and input provided by the Senate. Hopefully you have had a chance to provide feedback as well through the various platforms provided. We, as a University, will now begin to turn toward assimilating and refining the input received, setting priorities, and taking the required steps to reach our goals and aspirations. I'm sure this will involve additional opportunities to strategize, innovate, and work together on enhancing academic excellence.

As we embark on this adventure to "change the face" of SMU, so to speak, I think back to a time not so long ago when things were different for me. Up until about 3 years ago, I had, shall we say, an altogether different appearance. Some of you haven't known me long enough to know this, so now you know something new about me. Some of you know this about me and are perhaps remembering those days fondly [or not]. And some of you right now are thinking, "Oh! You're THAT guy!". Yes, I'm that guy.

But it was a fairly substantial change to become "that guy." You might say this was a "bold" alteration, a "change of face". At the very least, it was the only time in my career where I was introduced to as the "distinguished" professor from Mechanical Engineering. As we look to be bold in our pursuit of academic excellence, there are a few things from my experience I'd like to share:

1. Change will not happen overnight. It requires patience and persistence. The important thing is to get started when the timing is right. For me, it only took a sabbatical to set the mood. For SMU, one could argue it is imperative that we act. Higher education is increasingly competitive, and the competition is growing not just nationally, but also in our own back yard.
2. It will require changing our habits. In my case, not only did I change my daily routine with the razor, but I also had to start shampooing my face. If we aspire to advance in academic excellence and stature, we cannot continue to do things as we have in the past. We must strengthen what works well, remove or repair what is broken, and forge new paths.
3. Sometimes things may not go as expected. I frequently received inquisitive remarks about why I would have such full featured facial hair. Is there some event you are promoting? Movember, maybe? Maybe he's hiding a severe facial deformity. Do you like cough drops? You must be a Red Sox fan. These were not the reactions I was expecting, but they did prompt interesting conversations and lead me to see things in a new way. Likewise, some changes and initiatives may not produce the expected results, but they likely will produce new perspectives and experience that is helpful in ways we didn't anticipate.
4. A "new face" will present new opportunities. In my case, it was the closest I'd come to achieving "rock star" status. A random admirer in the mall once asked to take my picture. The pharmacist stopped asking me my name, even though he saw me only

once every month or so. And Dean Quick even invited me to become an honorary geologist! We may develop new collaborations, find new resources, and initiate new disciplines, all because we're trying new things or approaching them in new ways. We must seek these opportunities and build on them when they arise.

5. There are somethings we can't change. I'd like to show you another picture of myself from over 15 years ago, when I first came to SMU. There are several differences, but the one I'm most aware of is that I now have less hair than I did back then. Some of you may scoff, but I know it's true because now every time I get my hair cut the stylist asks me if I'd like to try their "thinning hair" shampoo. I don't have direct control over how much hair I have, but I can change my hair style and, of course, grow a new beard. We must accept the reality that somethings are beyond our direct control and use our ingenuity and fortitude to work around, over, and through the constraints we face to achieve our objectives. As was once said by the late Randy Pausch, now famous for the "last lecture" he gave at Carnegie Mellon University, "The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough."

Many of you have worked very hard to provide thoughtful input on what we are doing well, where we can improve, and what our strategy should be moving forward. It's not a simple task. It's important to be bold and innovative, but also strategic. We must stay focused and use our resources wisely. But most importantly, we must work together.

I encourage you, if you haven't already, to become involved in the process. Build collaborations, share ideas, propose program improvements. And in all of this, remember the value that *you* add. My dad once related to me a story told to him by a technician at a clinic for the hearing impaired. She described an elderly couple that came to visit one day, a man and his wife. The man was barely able to hear a word. Much of his world was closed off due to his impairment. When he tried some of the equipment at the clinic, his eyes brightened as suddenly he could hear again. The shade had been lifted and some of the old spark returned. But then they were shown the price. Upon looking at the cost, his wife exclaimed, "Well, you're not worth it." So he took out the hearing aids and they left, returning to the dull and numb reality he'd had before. Let us not venture down the same path. Whatever the cost, whatever the resources and time required, as we work to enhance academic excellence at SMU, remember and know that our students are worth it, and you are worth it.