

**College of Sciences (COS)
Meeting of Dean's Executive Council
2 February 2009**

Present:

Dean - George Perry

Department Chairs - Alan Dutton, Waldek Gorski, Miguel Jose-Yacaman, Sandy Norman, Kleanthis Psarris

Associate Deans - Raymond Baird, Craig Jordan, George Negrete, Andy Tsin

Center/Institute/Program Directors - Aaron Cassill, Weldon Hammond, Joe Lazor, Ravi Sandhu

Assistant Dean - Garry Castellanos

COS Undergraduate Advising Director - Patti Gonzalez

COS Retention and Graduation Analyst - Diane Elizondo

Representative for Dr. Barea-Rodriguez - Hans Heidner

Guest Speakers - Amanda Beck, Stuart Birnbaum, Richard Diem, Christi Fish, Barbara Millis, Antonio Rivera

Summary Notes

Expert Spokesperson Guide

Amanda Beck, COS Communications Specialist, introduced Christi Fish, Public Affairs Specialist, from the University Communications office. Amanda explained that she is involved with internal media and Christi with external media. Christi is assigned to work with two colleges - Engineering and Sciences. One project Christi is involved with is the expert spokesperson guide. It is being revamped so media can contact university faculty experts. The guide is not up-to-date and only 35 faculty members are listed. Amanda and Christi are meeting once a week to discuss college activities. Christi requested administrators contact her about any stories that can be developed involving faculty, students, alumni and staff.

ExxonMobil Science and Engineering Fair and COS Governor's Summer Camp

Dr. Birnbaum emphasized that the College of Sciences plays a major role in the science fair. Dates of the fair are March 27-30, 2009. Judging will be on Sunday, March 29. He implored department chairs to notify faculty and to encourage them to participate in this event. Faculty and graduate students are needed to serve on the Science Review Committee (SRC). This committee reviews documents about projects that provide information on how regulations and safety guidelines were followed. During the days of the fairs volunteers are also needed. Dr. Birnbaum will follow up with the departments.

Last year, Governor Perry's office provided additional funds for a residential summer camp. The schedule for the camp was put together quickly and included a trip to ExxonMobil. The Governor wants to expand the camp to increase the number of student participants. The Governor also wishes to acknowledge the teachers of the winning students in some manner. We are still working out the details but anticipate having up to ten teachers on campus along with the students.

Dr. Birnbaum requested that department chairs help him by providing a list of topical ideas that would be engaging and interesting for a three to four day program. He suggested a common theme: One day of physics, one day of chemistry, and one day of computer science. We need to find someone to develop curriculum and have faculty run it. Field trips will again be included in the camp. There will be no more than 40 students. The time frame for the camp is the third week in June. Dr. Birnbaum requested input from department chairs by 4 February 2009.

Curriculum Development

Dr. Perry welcomed Dr. Richard Diem, Dean, Honors College and Dr. Barbara Millis, Director of the Teaching, Excellence and Mentoring (TEAM) Center. Dr. David Jones, Associate Dean of Admissions, UTHSCSA, was unable to attend the meeting as he was called to serve on an NIH panel. As discussed on several occasions in meetings of the Dean's Executive Council, UTSA students are not admitted to health professions programs in the numbers that might be expected. This issue was discussed with Provost Frederick and a committee was formed. Dr. Diem and Dr. Millis gave a briefing on a strategy implemented in an attempt to rectify the situation. It proposed two solutions, both revolving around pre-health professions (PHP) students' perceived weaknesses in the areas of critical analysis and application of factual material on the MCAT and similar aptitude tests.

The first element in the strategy is to address PHP students' weaknesses in the areas of critical analysis and application. It was reported that relatively few of the PHP students take MCAT preparatory classes, frequently because of the high cost involved. An MCAT preparatory course was set up and offered at about half the cost of commercially available preparatory courses (\$800 vs. \$1500+). It was noted that 30% of the students who signed up did not finish the course. Dr. Diem indicated that students who completed the preparatory course did well on the MCAT test (but no comparative data were presented giving the performance of those who dropped out of the course or comparable PHP students who never signed up for it).

The second element in the strategy is to address PHP students' weaknesses in the areas of critical analysis and application on the MCAT somewhat more indirectly. Specifically, the goal of this element of the strategy is to incorporate more relevant skill training in courses which are required by PHP programs. President Romo and Provost Frederick have provided funding to bring three recognized "experts" to UTSA over the next several months to conduct workshops which will assist faculty in their efforts to re-design courses. Dr. Millis provided handouts with information on the dates of workshops and other scheduled activities for the Provost's initiative to promote critical thinking.

In the discussion that followed, the point was made that success in teaching has not been a major criterion in faculty retention, promotion, or merit. Until/unless this attitude is changed, faculty will probably not expend the effort necessary to change their instructional strategies because of the low expected payoff. Another concern is that the discrepancy between students' high grades and lower MCAT scores may impact accreditation. This discrepancy could reflect different emphases in content of the test and what is being taught in the classes.

Provost Frederick has provided money for curriculum development which has to be spent by August. Drs. Diem and Millis are willing to attend department meetings. Dr. Diem should be contacted if the college or department wants to have a workshop about best practices in teaching,

Dean's Graduate Fellowships and other Diversity Initiatives' Announcements

A draft document on COS Dean's Fellowships for South Texas for first-year doctoral students was provided by Dr. Negrete. Funds from the doctoral programs will be transferred to the Dean's office for recruiting students from South Texas. This has support from the Provost's office. Departments will recommend students from recruitment pools. Departments are expected to provide support to Dean's Fellows who are in good academic standing during subsequent academic years. Dr. Perry requested that department chairs review the document and provide comments to Dr. Negrete. Department chairs should be thinking about who they want to nominate.

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

Dr. Perry stated that Dr. Tiekink was on a leave of absence. He requested administrators to send him recommendations of faculty members who could serve in this position.

Provost's Memorandum - Course Prerequisites

After a discussion of the Provost's memorandum sent on prerequisites, it was decided that the department chairs would let Patti Gonzalez know by April 1 how they want to handle students who request to waive the 08-10 prerequisites due to an earlier catalog of graduation.

Scholarships and Student Grievances

In order to advertise the college scholarships Dr. Jordan asked faculty members for their assistance in publishing a link on their WebCT/Blackboard courses. Dr. Jordan requested faculty members to give permission to Tamara Popescu (COS WebCT Associate) to add a link to the College of Sciences Scholarships on their online courses. Dr. Jordan requested and received permission from the Departments of Chemistry and Physics and Astronomy to add the link to all online courses from their departments.

Dr. Jordan mentioned student grievances and asked administrators about including a section about the process for filing a student grievance in a syllabus. There have been a few grievances and some students do not follow the process. Dr. Tsin suggested improving links so students can find information. Dr. Baird commented that he was not sure that adding a grievance procedure to a syllabus would save time and might generate more grievances.

Step Up Undergraduate Advisors of Record (UGAR) Sessions and Strategic Planning Committee

Patti Gonzalez distributed a handout and noted the upcoming (UGAR) meetings. She mentioned the Strategic Planning Committee and said she has names of faculty representatives to serve from Geological Sciences and Physics and Astronomy. She would like to have representatives from each department for the first meeting in mid-February.

High Achieving First-Year Students

Diane Elizondo stated that students identified as outstanding sophomores will be eligible for a scholarship drawing on 2 February which would be an incentive for them to remain at UTSA. A reception recognizing the recipients will be held on 3 March from 2-3 p.m. in the Hidalgo Room in the UC. She also provided a handout on information gathered from students about reasons why they left UTSA after their first year of study that was collated in summer 2008. Diane provided handouts on high-achieving cohort students from Fall 2008. COS has the highest number of high achieving students. These students have been sent letters with information about COS scholarships. Any suggestions on other efforts to retain students can be sent to Diane. Dr. Perry will work with Diane to have programs for all levels.

Board of Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards

The deadline for nominations is 13 February to the Dean's Office.

President's Distinguished Achievement Awards

Dr. Perry encouraged department chairs to nominate at least one faculty member in each category. He commented that they could use the same information from last year. The deadline for nominations to the Dean's office is 27 February.

Education Committee Report on Texas K-12 Math and Science Education

Dr. Perry informed administrators that he was providing the handout he received at a Deans' meeting with the Provost for their information.