

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Southwest Tennessee Community College
Macon Campus
March 5, 2013

A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Todd Blankenbeckler, president, called the meeting to order at 3:00. The following senators were present:

Joan McGrory
Bill Turner
Doug Branch
Jason Whitt
Robert Walker
Leslie Peeples

Dewey Sykes
Joanitha Barnes
Donald Thomas
Mahnaz Ghaffarian
LaDonna Young

The following members sent a proxy:

Margie Coltharp
Karen Pierce
Annie Sultana
John Friedlander

The following senators were absent:

Rosie Taylor
Nathan Knappler
Michael Scott

The following guests were present:

Dwight Campbell
Jane Harris

B. Reading of the Minutes

The minutes were approved as read.

C. Guest Speaker – Dr. Nathan Essex

Todd introduced Dr. Essex, President of Southwest Tennessee Community College.

Dr. Essex addressed the Senate regarding the state of the college. He expressed his main concerns at this point were enrollment, growth, retention and graduation, and that everyone has a role to play in meeting these initiatives.

He informed the Senate that the stimulus money is set to run out this year, which means that effective June 30 there will be no more temp positions. Efforts are underway to try to merge functions. He would like to avoid layoffs. We are presently too heavy at the mid-management level and he will be scrutinizing those positions. The college will look at implementing split appointments whereby employees could be involved in activities in other divisions.

Regarding enrollment, 1445 students who were academically eligible did not return this Spring from the Fall semester. In total, 4775 students did not return for Spring.

Regarding the budget, Dr. Essex stated that all other community colleges saw an increase except for Southwest. Southwest's budget has decreased by six million dollars. In light of this budget reduction, the college needs to increase enrollment in order to offset/reduce costs. He encouraged faculty to continue to work with students who are serious about completing their degree.

Dr. Essex entertained the following questions/concerns from the Senate:

Question: Is it better to have a student enroll and not finish than to not enroll at all?

Answer: Yes, because it increases tuition, which is our only discretionary income.

Question: We get a lot of transient students in the summer. Are they not helping in the funding formula?

Answer: No, only as pertains to tuition.

Question: What can we say to students to try to get them to stay and complete their degree rather than going to the University of Memphis?

Answer: Emphasize cheaper tuition, smaller class size and better instruction. Parents are beginning to recognize this.

Question: How do you overcome the perception of "why bother with a 2-year degree if I will be transferring to a 4-year institution?"

Answer:

- An Associate's degree will prepare students for some job markets.
- Many students will not complete a 4-year degree.
- Many AAS degrees pay more than 4-year degrees.
- If you finish your degree here, all Gen Eds should transfer.

Discussion: Joan McCrory pointed out, however, that the University of Memphis is not accepting some transfer courses.

Question: How are we recruiting adults?

Answer:

- We're working to make the campus more adult friendly by including more non-traditional course offerings and identifying dedicated space for adult learners.
- Through College Finish Line we're attempting to identify adult students who took courses at the college in the past, but didn't finish their degrees, and encouraging them to do so.
- Trying to promote employment assistance to help adults come back to school.

Discussion:

- The hours and location of the Testing Center is a hurdle for adult learners. We need to be careful with cuts so as to not understaff necessary functions.
- Old transcripts on the quarter system are incompatible and students are often required to repeat a course.
- Most support services cut off at 4:30. Can hours be extended one day a week or on Saturday?

Question: Why the necessity for student IDs? Isn't the public allowed on campus?

Answer: Yes, the public is allowed on campus. Student IDs allow us to identify our students and also allows the college to put safety measures in place.

Discussion:

- What's the consequence of not wearing them? There needs to be some sort of either positive incentive or negative consequence to adherence.
- Requiring IDs creates an atmosphere of mistrust; seems a little high-schoolish. Requiring adults to wear IDs may be a turn-off.

Question: Has there been a study regarding the switch to Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes?

Answer: Haven't seen any data on that.

Discussion:

- Has faculty been questioned about it? There have been a lot of student complaints. Students just don't show up on Friday.
- Going back to Monday/Wednesday classes makes more sense in terms of:
 1. Gas prices.
 2. Working adults – Friday and Saturday could be used for a weekend institute for adult learners.
- Students have expressed concerns numerous times and feel their voices aren't being heard.
- There is a misconception that faculty just doesn't want to work on Friday.

Question: Why was Dr. McBride not recommended for Dean of Liberal Studies? Why could the search committee not secure a recommendation for Dr. McBride? How was the search committee formed? What did the committee use as their basis for evaluation? Does Dr. McBride not deserve the professional courtesy to be considered?

Answer: Dr. Essex said he couldn't comment on that. He was unaware of the composition of the committee. He will take the matter up with Dr. Bassett; however, he trusts Dr. Bassett's judgment.

Discussion:

- Why the secrecy? Faculty was kept in the dark that Dr. McBride had been asked to step down.
- What's the logic of having one dean assume all those responsibilities?
- It appears to be a common practice that individuals are placed in interim positions for a period of three years.
- The Issue seems to be a matter of trust.
- Such actions send a negative message to the rest of the college.

Question: Considering the budget shortfall, where do we stand on athletics? Are the athletic programs on the table?

Answer: Yes. Unless the athletic programs can raise funds to sustain themselves, they may have to be phased out. They have been given a target.

Discussion: Athletics seems outside of the core mission.

Question: How will summer pay be impacted?

Answer: We will try to continue as usual. Again, there will be a push to increase enrollment.

Question: Will faculty development funds be available again in the Fall?

Answer: It depends. He is optimistic we can return to normal.

Discussion: While we can use the funds to bring someone in for faculty development, there is much to be gained from networking outside the city limits.

Question: Are we surveying students who did not return from the Fall? If so, will faculty have access to that information?

Answer: Yes.

Some additional initiatives Dr. Essex stated are being worked on are:

- Moving to a smoke-free campus.
- Creating an environment that is profanity-free.
- Banning baggy pants. (The SGA supports this.) This will have to go to the TBR for approval.

E. Unfinished Business:

1. Grade Appeals : The revision will be sent out for an electronic vote.
2. Same sex benefits: Concern was expressed that faculty was reluctant to express their opinion on the subject openly. There was a motion and a second to let all faculty vote anonymously on the matter. After a lengthy discussion, there was an amendment from the floor that we add the language indicating that if this matter goes to a vote, we all share in any potential financial impact. Hearing no second, that motion failed. Again, after more discussion the question was called. The motion to allow all faculty to participate in the vote passed by a vote of 9 to 4, with 1 abstention.
3. Mandatory advising: Matter tabled until April.

F. New Business:

Todd Blankenbeckler announced that, due to his appointment as Interim Director of Distance Education, he would be resigning as President of the Faculty Senate. However, with the Senate's approval, he would carry out his duties through the April meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30. The next meeting of the Senate will be April 16, 2013 at Macon.