Minutes of the Provost's Council Meeting of February 19, 2008

Present: Moustafa Abdelsamad, Anantha Babbili, David Billeaux, Richard Gigliotti, Mary Jane Hamilton, Carlos Huerta, Dee Hopkins, Harvey Knoll, Frank Pezold, Christine Shupala

Not Present: Margaret Dechant, Veronica Guerra, Mark Hartlaub, Claudia McDonald, Wes Tunnell

Guests: Sam Hill, Joe Miller (for Jim Needham)

Note Taker: Kathy Winston

Call to Order

Anantha Babbili called the meeting to order.

**MA in Communication**

The degree request for a new MA in Communication program was submitted to the council for review as part of the campus review process for new degree programs. While not expressing opposition to this program, several council members expressed concerns about the effect of new programs on existing programs in a time of scarce resources. Many existing programs have shortages of faculty, they said. Creating new programs adds to that deficit and could result in long-term hardships for existing programs. Insufficient resources are going into existing undergraduate programs. According to another council member, new faculty lines that were included in various degree requests in the past have not always been funded. As the programs grow, faculty members are spread too thin. Because of faculty shortages, some programs have had to restrict admissions. Concern was expressed about the need to honor commitments made to the Coordinating Board to hire sufficient faculty for proposed programs. Some council members commented that money generated by academic programs is not going back into academics but is being used for other purposes.

Speaking in support of the proposed MA in Communication, Gigliotti said that the College of Liberal Arts is being strategic in the degrees it is putting forward. There is evidence that this will be a good degree. The large communication undergraduate program has over 300 majors, and there is student demand for a master's degree in the field. Gigliotti does not intend to sacrifice undergraduate programs for graduate programs. The communication faculty will teach both undergraduate and graduate courses. The degree request includes three new lines over a five-year period, which is dependent on the growth of the program. The faculty does not want the program without new faculty lines. Babbili urged support for the proposed program. The Coordinating Board has approved the preliminary authority request. The faculty wants to offer the program. A promising program should not be punished because something else is not fixed. Babbili will convey the viewpoints expressed at the meeting to the administration.

Following lengthy discussion, the MA in Communication was approved to move forward.

**Proposed Academic Minors**

Three proposed undergraduate minors were reviewed by the Provost's Council as part of the campus process for approving new minors:

- Minor in Entrepreneurship  
  College of Business
- Minor in Management  
  College of Business
- Minor in European Union Studies  
  College of Liberal Arts

The minors were approved unanimously.
Campus-Wide Assessment

This topic, which was on the agenda, was not discussed.

Report by Sam Hill: THECB Developments Concerning Graduate Education

Sam Hill, the university’s representative on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Graduate Education Advisory Committee, briefed the council on Coordinating Board trends concerning graduate education. Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes supports the California model for graduate education. (Doctoral programs are concentrated in the University of California System, although the California State University System serves many more students.) Paredes believes the review of graduate programs and scholarship should be more rigorous. State support for higher education may continue to diminish; universities will be forced to raise tuition. With scarce resources, there should be better assessment of the need for doctoral programs. The commissioner does not believe that enough resources exist for all universities to have doctoral programs. Low-producing doctoral programs should not be supported. There will probably be a shift from enrollment-based formula funding to a performance-based system. In the past, access was the big issue; in the future it will be quality. The international market place in higher education is becoming more competitive. Peer review of graduate programs will be international peer review. If universities enroll doctoral students, they must be prepared to support those students.

Paredes believes the state should place primary emphasis on undergraduate education. The Closing the Gaps Initiative has not met its goals. Undergraduates must get the education they need to be ready for graduate work.

Hill said that there is a silent moratorium on the approval of new doctoral programs at the Coordinating Board. Many staff members are leaving the Coordinating Board. Hill said 18 characteristics of doctoral programs have been developed. How universities rate according to these criteria will be placed on the web in 2009.

Other Issues of the Council

The BAAS degree program was approved by the Faculty Senate.

Momentum 2015 is being revisited for strategic planning.

Billeaux discussed the SACS Quality Education Plan (QEP) process. A committee is being assembled. Representatives are needed from all colleges. More minorities are needed so that the committee will be representative. The purpose of the committee is to select a topic for the QEP. Some people may be involved further when another committee is formed to develop the plan. The QEP director will be a ½ time released faculty member.