

UT Board of Trustees  
Academic Affairs and Student Life Committee  
MINUTES  
June 21, 2006  
Knoxville Campus

The meeting was called to order by Chair Andrea Loughry at 8:00 a.m. The roll was called by Dr. Levy.

Committee members present: Ms. Loughry, Ms. Castleman, Dr. Petersen, Dr. Pfeffer, Dr. Rhoda, Mr. Schledwitz, Mr. Stansberry, Mr. Sturdivant, Ms. Bogle, Dr. Cook, Ms. Cheung, Ms. Kennedy, Dr. LeMaster, Dr. Rice, and Mr. Woodruff.

Committee members absent: Commissioner Givens, Commissioner Seivers, Ms. Arender, Ms. Baldi, Ms. Grafton, Ms. Lewis, Mr. Olles, and Mr. Orr.

Minutes of the March 16 meeting were approved as written.

#### INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Report on Program Terminations and Additions

Dr. Levy reported that over time, UT has added about one third as many programs as it has terminated. The programs that have been added in recent years are all unusual programs-- programs that have brought UTC to the doctoral level, programs that have focused on very specific markets, such as the master's program in Dental Hygiene at Memphis, and programs that are combinations of disciplines we've not really done before (e.g., this meeting's proposal for a UTK master's program in Reliability and Maintainability Engineering is not just in one department in engineering, but crosses several different Engineering departments and out into the College of Business Administration's Statistics faculty.) These are all things that fit the mission capabilities of the State of Tennessee and the University of Tennessee. This trend will continue for the next few years.

2. Academic Program Reviews

Ms. Loughry wanted to know if we are updating our teaching model, and how we know what processes are reviewed before they come before the Board? Dr. Levy explained that for today's meeting the UTK Academic Program Review system is being used as a model, but every UT program gets reviewed on a regular basis. The system that is in place at Knoxville is a very good example of the kinds of things that going on at all campuses.

Dr. Crabtree commented that Knoxville does regular accreditation reviews for many of programs, trying to demonstrate all the good things about the programs so they will be reaccredited. In the internal reviews, however, UT looks at all the warts and blemishes, and then decides how to make improvements. For more than 25 years, Knoxville has been carrying out program reviews that have several common characteristics. There is a self-study that is created first by the unit, and is usually very extensive. Then a peer evaluation team is created that includes two external reviewers drawn from peer institutions around the country, and three internal reviewers from different parts of campus. They spend over

two days on campus, interviewing everyone involved. The culmination is a meeting with the chancellor and all the chief central administrators, where they receive a preliminary report from the reviewers. The reviewers then write the report and bring it back within a month or so, which allows the department to review the findings. They are usually very crisp and critical, and offer comments about how to improve the program. The department, led by the department head, then responds to that report, indicating whether or not they agree with the critique and what they plan to do. A plan of action is then outlined for the next ten years.

In three years there is a return visit for the mid-cycle review to take a look at what the department, college, and campus have done to address the issues that were identified. This is the critical point, and may be the key to this program. In many cases, the mid-cycle reviewers can tell the unit (department, college, campus) has not done what they said they would do. These reviews are candid, they look at all the issues, and they set out a plan to address these issues. They also relate to performance funding and THEC, because THEC gets reports about these reviews. The outcomes are pretty clear, and sometimes, there is a leadership change in the unit; we always have targeted enhancement programs within our available resources; and the program changes – deletions, additions and mergers – can be seen. There have been 87 program deletions since 1987 and only 18 new programs added.

It is a very solid program that leads to substantive accountability and change. This is a classic example of shared governance, because the faculty of the unit are engaged at every stage – it is not an administrative review, but a faculty review – and they're using good peer reviewers from outside.

Dr. Levy asked how they identified who is supposed to what, and when, after the main review is finished. Chancellor Crabtree responded that there is a departmental agreement on a plan of action which indicates what the central administration ought to be doing to assist that unit. It also shows the areas where the department head and the faculty need to address the problems that have been identified. There is a clear line of administrative action that will address whatever problems there might be. The responsibility is shared, but central administration does have a certain responsibility.

Dr. Rice asked if the administration was more likely to respond to an outside program like that. Dr. Crabtree responded that the specialized accreditation teams are difficult. They are designed to extract resources from the administration to benefit individual units. If they have really identified significant problems, these will be addressed. Oftentimes, however, the campus will respond to its review system because it is "custom-fitted" to the campus.

Dr. Levy remarked that the external reviewers vary enormously from discipline to discipline. The ABET Engineering accreditors are a good example of are consistently fair and decent assessments.

### 3. THEC Performance Funding Program

Reporting on this, Dr. Levy remarked that Performance Funding began at THEC in the middle 70's, when the question was whether a state could allocate state dollars on performance rather than on enrollment or faculty salaries--not just what is done, but the extent to which it is accomplished. THEC's Performance Funding program is conceptually robust, but it sometimes suffers from weak assessment criteria and instruments. For example, UT is concerned about general education. Our students take about a third of their credit hours with us in what we call General Ed. These are courses designed to help students pick a major, to help them become better citizens when they graduate, and to help them become critical thinkers. We know this time with us is important, but we're not sure exactly how to measure it, since there is no national standardized instrument for General Ed.

One of the very interesting pieces of Performance Funding is where THEC uses an outside agency to survey enrolled students at UT and across the US. The survey asks about their engagement in campus life, i.e. what kind of advising, who they have met, how often they see faculty members for office hours, how hard was it to get classes scheduled, how many people from other countries they have met, etc. We also ask students, two years after they graduate, how we did – what about advising, preparation for employment, writing skills – all the usual kinds of questions regarding academics. In 2008 we will start an employer survey, asking employers what they think about our graduates.

Mr. Jackson stated that he wasn't sure if all trustees were aware those things were being done, and wondered if it would be possible to see some results. Dr. Levy said they would be given some sample surveys and reports of results.

Dr. Levy also stated that Performance Funding also deals with persistence to graduation, the State Master Plan, and the Delaware Study. THEC deserves much credit for keeping us on the straight and narrow, and for coming up with a mechanism to reward us.

Dr. Rhoda then reported that Performance Funding is not a legislative mandate but is voluntary. It also is not a report card, because it is not used to compare one institution to another. It is now tied, more than it ever has been, to SACS Quality Enhancement. It is also tied to national benchmarks, and we try to mesh it with the THEC Master Plan. Performance Funding is a program that is constantly under review, but does translate into dollars. Tennessee has the highest dollar percent of state funding that's tied to performance – 5.45% of the institution's base appropriation. It may seem insignificant looking at the percent figure, but in 04-05, it translated into over \$50 million of the overall request. UT as a system does very well: over the last five years, UT Knoxville was at \$44 million worth of Performance Funding, UTC was at \$10 million, UTM was at \$7.6 million.

Ms. Loughry asked if teacher evaluations were being done by the students. Dr. Levy replied that student evaluations of instruction are done every semester. Faculty members are also evaluated by their department heads.

Dr. Crabtree mentioned that peer reviews were also done, especially on the way to promotion and tenure. Each department is asked to provide peer reviews of the faculty members' teaching. They usually go to the classrooms unannounced to observe a class, then write an evaluation of the professor's classroom performance. That goes into the mix as to whether or not that person should be tenured. A person can be a good researcher, and not be a good teacher, so this action is significant. At UT student reviews and peer reviews count.

Dr. Dunagan commented that the real key in an evaluation is the department head. Student evaluations are usually very close. The relationship that the department head has with faculty members, particularly young faculty members--are they mentoring them? are they observing their classes?— is a very important tool. Another important factor is what is happening in technology and evaluating how a professor is delivering classes to students.

Dr. Brown agreed with the others that it's the peers and the department heads who have the greatest opportunity to observe a pattern of performance. Our challenge is to discover a faculty member's weaknesses (if any) early on, and then to put a mentoring and improvement plan into place. Our hope is to achieve, in the written record of annual reviews, a point where it will show from the very first year things a faculty member should be working on. When a negative review of a faculty member comes to him, the department head should be able to look back at the early years and see how they were mentored, how they were coached to improve their teaching, and where they were in their research and community service. It's a cumulative track of evaluations that add up to a total picture of whether this person is actually serving our students adequately.

Dr. Levy stated that a lot of faculty members, on their own, do a mid-semester review with students to see whether they need to change their tactics for the rest of the semester. It's not official, but it is helpful. It also was remarked that the review process at UTC is extremely thorough, well-meaning, and a good thing overall. Good feedback is received from department heads, peer reviewers, and students as well.

Dr. Petersen commented that the probationary period for tenure is seven years. If they're not being done right, you end up with some surprises. Faculty should be evaluated all during their probationary period. Dr. Levy remarked that when we hire a faculty member, the faculty member and UT sign a set of appointment papers that state the maximum probationary period for tenure will be (usually seven years).

The annual review is with the department head, but there is a mid-term review that is very important because it is made up of the faculty member's peers. A faculty member has a clearer idea from their feedback whether or not he/she is on the right track. Midway into their probationary period, they usually an idea of where they stand, and have an idea of where their deficiencies are.

Dr. LeMaster remarked that most student evaluations of faculty are not based on personality, but value. If, after mid-probationary review, a faculty member doesn't get tenure, it's because he or she wasn't listening, or just didn't take the evaluation to heart and just kept plowing ahead. In most cases, faculty members know early on whether or not they are on track for getting tenure. Dr. Rice said that students may sometimes be inarticulate on their evaluations, but faculty should take them very seriously. He also expressed concern that some faculty members may be hesitant to push students as they should out of fear of the student evaluations.

Mr. Cook reported that at UTHSC, faculty members also receive peer evaluations from course directors. They always sit in on new instructors coming in. The College of Medicine has a program that has faculty members from another department sit-in on classes. On the graduate school level, all courses are evaluated by the students. They will not receive a final grade until they have submitted their course evaluations. He also mentioned that over the years, there has been a variation in the styles of evaluations, and asked if they should be standardized.

Mr. Schledwitz asked what percent of all faculty was tenured. Dr. Levy responded that it was about 60%.

A question was asked about what happened in the case of someone who may be a great researcher but an ineffective teacher. Dr. Crabtree responded that it was up to the department head to monitor that. In some cases they can be re-evaluated, usually in their sixth year of probation, to check their improvement.

#### 4. English Competency of Instructors

Dr. Levy reported that 22 years ago, the Board passed a policy saying this situation needed to be addressed. Since then, UT has basically two tracks – one for faculty members and one for teaching assistants. Before they're admitted to graduate school, graduate students from another country have to take a test called the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The test is taken in their own country, so we're not really sure what they sound like or how well they understand spoken English. When they come here, we test them again with the SPEAK test. This determines how well they can understand and respond orally. If they score properly, they are allowed to go on with their Graduate Assistant career; if not, we remediate them. They go to the English Language Institute and they take non-credit courses until their test score is satisfactory. Because they have already been through a lot of things in this country in English language institutions, getting their degrees, etc., faculty members are not tested. However, we do require – when they are hired and when they are tenured and promoted – that their department head and/or dean sign-off in writing that each non-native speaker is competent in English to be able to perform the job duties.

Mr. Schledwitz asked what we were doing to assist in the improvement of these professors. Dr. Crabtree reported that the most persistent problem is in Math classes. There is a pilot program in the Math Department, where a facilitator will be the liaison between students and non-native speaking professors. If professors do not improve on their own, they will need to be remediated.

Mr. Cook asked if the faculty of Speech Pathology or any other faculty were involved. Dr. Crabtree responded that new faculty were introduced to see how they were fitting in. If a large problem is noticed with the student understanding a professor, they are sent to remediation. One problem is we are not producing enough American undergraduates and graduates in math and science.

5. Student Advising

Dr. High stated that Trustees usually hear only the bad things regarding student advising. The fact is, advisors can **advise** but they can't **make** students do what they say or suggest. Good advising is a key part of helping students to succeed. The most important thing that has to happen is trust between a student and an advisor.

UT advising staff does an excellent job in also working with the parents, which is important because the most direct advice occurs with freshmen, who are often overwhelmed and aren't always able to take in everything that's told to them.

For students who come to UT knowing exactly what they want to do, advising them is usually very clear cut. Those students who are undeclared are usually advised to take a First Year Studies course. Once students declare a major, they are paired up with a faculty member in their department. When students don't take advice that's given them, they can quickly get into trouble.

CONSENT ITEMS

1. Approval of M.S. Degree with a Major in Reliability and Maintainability Engineering (UTK)

Dr. Levy reported that this major will produce people who are highly-trained professionals who know how to use engineering expertise and statistical expertise to control the manufacturing processes so there is good quality control, and who also can control the product of the processes. The consultant, who was very "hard-nosed," said that this program was nearly unique, that it breaks the boundaries of traditional academic structure, and that it will provide UTK with the opportunity to take Tennessee where it needs to be to assume national leadership. It is a remarkably innovative program.

The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval.

2. Revision of Undergraduate Hours-to-Graduation Requirements (UTK and UTM)

In October 2003, Interim UT President Joe Johnson asked that UTC, UTK, and UTM undergraduate degree curricula be examined so as to allow students to graduate with a minimum of 120 credit hours. UTC's report on action taken was accepted at the June 23, 2004 meeting of the Board of Trustees; however, the actions taken by UT Knoxville and UT Martin were not reported to the Board. Two attachments were included to correct the oversight.

The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval.

3. Tenure Recommendations

Dr. Petersen stated that giving tenure is the single most important thing we do for faculty and their careers. A strong tenure system is important to UT's ability to recruit and retain the most outstanding faculty members, and is important for academic quality control. This year there are 119 faculty members being recommended for tenure. This is the largest group presented in a dozen years. We are beginning to grow our core of tenured faculty members. We strive to be fiscally efficient, but we also strive not to over rely on part-time or adjunct faculty members. Our tenured faculty are the most valuable resource we have at the university. Getting tenured is not a right, but a privilege that is earned and taken very seriously.

The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval.

4. Authorization to Confer Degrees

The recommendation is that the president, or a university official designated by the president, be granted full authority to confer degrees at commencements held anytime during the coming year.

The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval.

5. Comprehensive Listing of Academic Programs

The Comprehensive Listing is UT's "inventory" of its academic programs. The Listing is organized by campus, college, department, major, submajor ("concentration," "option," "track," etc.), and degree. It is updated each June.

The proposal was unanimously recommended for approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.