

FACULTY SENATE

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING 11-17-05 / 3:45pm

Members Present: Kathryn Elam, Louis Gross, Andrew Haddow, Deseriee Kennedy, Catherine Luther, Peggy Pierce, Tim Rogers, Mary Mahoney (Guest)

- ❖ Kathryn Elam explained undergraduate student complaints regarding communication skills of GTAs in certain areas of teaching. Teaching areas specifically mentioned were math, microbiology, and biology. Elam had already received suggestions from Peggy Pierce via e-mail on how to approach this problem; other committee members provided additional comments/ideas:
 - Committee members stated that GTA Speak Test standards have recently been improved; perhaps improvements in communication skills might follow as a result.
 - Committee members provided Elam with recommendations on how she and the SGA might pursue documenting this problem. Recommendations included:
 - Categorize problem areas. This could be done through a student survey and a collection of anecdotal evidence. Efforts should be made to show that it is a valid problem that needs to be seriously considered. A formal report can then be submitted.
 - Request that questions pertaining to the ability of students to understand instructors be added to the Faculty and Course Evaluation forms.
 - Expressed problems can be directly discussed with the head of Speak Test, Jeff Miller, in order to gain his insight and recommendations.
 - Pursuing the problem should be done carefully so that national origin discrimination does not become entangled with the problem.
- ❖ Further discussion was carried out regarding the creation of an office/Web site specifically designed to help students secure information about internal and external funding opportunities and to prepare students in the application process. Efforts were made to better understand which existing UT center might be able to house such an office and/or maintain such a Web site.

UT Career Services

- Tim Rogers invited Mary Mahoney from UT Career Services to speak to the committee. Mahoney provided handbooks explaining some of the services that they provide. Guidance is provided to students to help them learn about themselves. Focus tends to be on freshmen and sophomores. They are very active in freshmen orientation. As students transition, Career Services staff help students with part-time employment and encourage students to find work in their field. They help students prepare résumés and interviews. Career Services arrange on-campus interviews with major firms.

- Question was asked as to whether or not UT Career Services handles scholarship applications. Mahoney responded that they generally do not. They have found that opportunities for grants/scholarships are usually handled at the departmental level. They do provide help in terms of résumé preparation for scholarship/fellowship applications.

- UT Career Services might possibly house an office and/or maintain a Web site designed specifically to assist students in scholarship/fellowship applications if funding were provided to create an additional personnel position. They currently

have a database of student majors and career preference. An additional database could be created to target students for certain scholarships/fellowships.

- Although funding is always a problem, committee members pointed out creating such a position and office/Web site would be beneficial to the university. More students could be encouraged to apply to scholarships/fellowships. If more students receive prestigious awards, UT's ranking among public universities would be enhanced.

- Committee members recognized that many of the scholarships/fellowships are specific to a field of study. Career Services, however, could act as a "hub" of information for distribution. Faculty members who have the expertise and experience with the scholarship/fellowship in question could be matched up with students. Recruitment of such faculty members could be a potential problem; office perhaps would need an outreach person to push it to happen.

Student Success Center

- Deseriee Kennedy informed committee members of her discussions with Ruth Darling from the Student Success Center. The center currently refers students to appropriate contact persons for various different grants, scholarships, and fellowships. Darling is open to the idea of having a staff member compile such information in order to centralize the information – a "one-stop" center.

- Kennedy also provided information about her discussions with Anne Mayhew. The focus appears to currently be on undergraduate students. As part of the Honors program, a Student Success Center committee is organizing a service that would help "groom" students for fellowships and scholarships.

- Committee members asked if such a service could be broadened to include graduate students. Kennedy responded that Mayhew relayed the notion that fellowships and scholarships for graduate students are too specific to disciplines and that the Graduate Studies office is currently handling graduate students. Members expressed concern that services, provided by Graduate Studies office, are not sufficient to meet graduate student needs.

- Elam provided her thoughts on the Student Success Center Web site. She mentioned that the site is quite comprehensive, but it is difficult to get to the site from UT's homepage. She believes it could be a great tool for students and parents and should be placed on UT's homepage. She plans to recommend that a link also be provided from the SGA site. Elam also mentioned that the site has much information on university life for undergraduate students, but not graduate students. Information regarding external funding is also lacking.

- Andrew Haddow mentioned that the GSS is attempting to redo its Web site to provide more information to graduate students. After hearing that students are handling the GSS site on their own, Rogers recommended that Haddow contact Tom Milligan to discuss obtaining assistance on the GSS site.

Center for International Education

- Catherine Luther provided information about the Center for International Education. CIE's unit, The Study Abroad Program, handles student inquiries into study abroad programs and scholarships. The program holds general information sessions every weekday from 2-2:30pm during which student advising takes place. The program also has a special library with brochures, pamphlets, and books to help students learn

about programs and travel assistance. Assistance is provided, when requested, for students who want to practice interviewing for fellowships.

- In response to CIE/Study Abroad information, committee member stated that, based on personal experience, the services need to be more comprehensive.

Other Institutions

- Haddow agreed to present the committee with information regarding the type of student services (pertaining to internal and external funding) that are available at other U.S. academic institutions.

❖ Haddow raised new business that should be of concern:

- Graduate students at the UT Space Institute are paying for their own wireless connection and their own health insurance. The institute currently has 42 graduate students. The students have had to raise money on their own in order to attend conferences. Kennedy and Lou Gross agreed to look into the problem.

- UT has announced it is closing down Kingston apartments which house graduate students and their families. The students have been told to find other living arrangements by June 30th. Other apartments available to graduate students are Laurel apts. and Sutherland apts. These apartments, however, do not have the additional units to handle all of the students from Kingston apartments. Kingston currently has 240 units. Southerland apts. will also be eventually closed down.

- A pronunciation workshop is held for the Speak Test. Many international students who want to further improve their English and pronunciation are requesting that the workshop be held on a continuing basis. Suggestion was made that perhaps the International House could handle such workshops. Haddow stated that the GSS plans to endorse the idea of having these workshops available to international students. The workshops are perceived as needed for teaching and career purposes. Committee members suggested that GSS work together with SGA since this issue is very much related to the SGA's concern with GTA English speaking skills.

❖ Meeting adjourned at 5:20pm