

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
December 3, 2004

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, December 3, 2004 in 203 MSC. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

The Council was informed of the visit to the University by Texas Senator Tommy Williams, who graduated from Texas A&M University in 1978. The Senator had questions regarding the large increase in designated tuition at universities across the state. Katie Cleaveland, Jack Hildebrand, Logan Renfrow, Cassie Rutherford and Lindsey Wilson briefed him on the proposals being discussed within the Tuition Policy Advisory Council.

The Chairman met with President Gates to update him on the Council's discussions. A public tuition hearing has been scheduled for January 24, 2005, 3:30-5:30 p.m. The hearing must take place before tuition increases are approved. Therefore, the hearing must take place before January 31 in order to allow tuition and fees recommendations to be brought to the March Board of Regents' meeting. Dr. Gates would like for one of the students to make a presentation at the public tuition hearing regarding the Tuition Policy Advisory Council's recommendations. Dr. Gates will follow this presentation with discussions on revenue and legislation.

The Chairman also met with the Council of Deans on December 1 to inform them of the Council's progress. The discussion was positive and the Deans were very interested in freshmen taking 15-16 hours, which will require the offering of many more sections of classes to accommodate the increase in semester credit hours.

The minutes of the November 24 flat tuition subcommittee meeting were distributed. These notes will provide a good starting point for writing the final report. 15 SCH appears to be a good point at which to flatten tuition. Students must take 15 or more hours to get the 14-hour rate. The current SCH per student per semester is 13.6. It is projected that flattening tuition at 15 hours will cause a shift in the average SCH to 15.1. It is further anticipated that there will be a 60% shift in full-time undergraduate students taking 15 or more hours per semester, which would increase total SCH from 430,000 to 475,000.

It was recommended that the \$600 premium be implemented and designated tuition be based on 14 hours. This could be increased to 15 hours at a later date if necessary. The savings to take more hours is not quite as great with a \$500 premium as would be realized with the \$600 premium. 12 SCH with a \$600 premium would amount to approximately \$3,000 in tuition and fees. 15-18 SCH would actually cost at or less than the cost of 12 SCH. A table should be included to show tuition charges at various SCH. Part-time undergraduate students should continue to be charged on a per semester credit hour basis.

When marketing flat rate tuition, people may ask why the University did not just raise designated tuition on a semester credit hour basis. The answer would be that the purpose is not to generate revenue but to change student behavior. Student Financial Aid has created a spreadsheet projecting the cost of remaining in school beyond four years. This chart will be included in the recommendations of the Council.

It was reported that there is no desire to provide differential incentives for the time of day that a class is offered. The interest in charging differential tuition during summer school is between upper and lower division courses. Upper division courses are more expensive to teach than lower division courses, so it stands to reason to charge more for upper division. An area of concern is that if more experienced faculty are expected to teach during the summer, they would need time during the regular academic year to conduct research. It is a goal of the University to increase upper division and graduate enrollment in the summer, and faculty workloads would need to be altered to include summer. Another area of concern is that provisional students could be greatly impacted since they are required to begin school in the summer. There is also a great deal of interest in charging differential tuition by college. Other institutions in Texas do this, as well as many of the Vision 2020 schools.

A fixed tuition policy would need to be fixed in increments of two years in order to coincide with the legislative sessions. It may be beneficial to defer implementing fixed tuition for a couple of years. This would allow time to study behavioral shifts that will occur with flat tuition and would, therefore, provide a better opportunity to determine appropriate fixed tuition rates. Additionally, within the next two years, the faculty reinvestment should be accomplished.

A report writing session has been scheduled for Monday, December 6, at 1:30 p.m. in the Provost's conference room for all members of the Council who can attend. A separate statement regarding graduate students will be written. The results of the writing session will be presented to the full Council on Wednesday, December 8, at 2:00 p.m. in 205 MSC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.