

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
January 21, 2005

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, January 21, 2005 in 205 MSC. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

Guest: President Robert M. Gates.

Dr. Gates stated that the Tuition Policy Advisory Council's work was not complete upon submission of their recommendations to him. The Council will continue to review tuition policy for such things as summer school. Perhaps the target audience for summer school should be upper division students, and therefore, more upper level courses would need to be offered.

Varying opinions were expressed regarding the incentive charge. Some believed \$500 was enough of an incentive charge and the budget impact would still be revenue positive, while others felt that \$600 would be more appropriate to modify student behavior towards 15 or more hours per semester.

Dr. Gates asked that one or more of the students on the Council make a presentation at the public tuition hearing regarding the Council's policy recommendations. Dr. Gates will make the portion of the presentation discussing the budget. The Council will need to make a case as to why the incentive is necessary at all. The legislature will use graduation rates as an accountability measure, and the incentive gives students an option as to how much tuition they pay. For instance, if students take more classes, they incur less cost. It is positive reinforcement when they can take more hours for the same cost, if not less cost in some cases. Teaching costs will increase if this program is successful, and the incentive charge would be used to cover that increased cost.

The current culture for students is to take about 12 hours, and with capped enrollment, the longer a student remains in school, it denies another student enrollment. One of the charges to the Council was to move graduation rates closer to four years. The subcommittees looked at what other universities do to accomplish this. Four year graduation rates at other land grant and Big 12 universities will be researched to compare where Texas A&M University ranks.

Texas State Representative, Fred Brown, is concerned about students' progress to degrees and he has embraced the concept of providing a monetary incentive to encourage students to graduate sooner. Donors to Texas A&M are also happy with the University considering ways to shorten graduation rates. A slide should be prepared showing that the legislature is pushing for improved four year graduation rates and how the Council's recommendations are expected to accomplish this.

The Student Financial Aid office is preparing new cost charts for remaining in school four years, five years, and six years. Another good slide for the presentation would be to

benchmark tuition costs at Texas A&M compared to other universities. It would be good to include universities that people may not think of.

Dr. Gates recommended that the Council roll back the incentive to \$500 and increase the percentage of the recommendation for fixed tuition that designated tuition should not be increased by more than ten percent during the second year of the biennium rather than the initial recommendation of five percent. The ten percent increase provides the flexibility of not knowing what the legislature will do. However, it was noted that the \$500 incentive probably would not cause fewer people to criticize the proposal than the \$600 incentive.

An advantage of the recommendations would be that more money will come back from the State as the number of semester credit hours is increased. Another advantage in the students' minds would be that if every student were to take 15 hours or more, the University would not collect any money in incentives. An additional slide for the presentation should show what the University has done to reduce costs.

Information for the hearing regarding flat tuition should be delivered in two parts: 1) background information including the many options that were considered, and 2) the recommendations. The slides need to be stand alone, as the presentation will be placed on the web site.

The public hearing was originally scheduled for Monday, January 24, but has been rescheduled for the following Monday, January 31. The next meeting of the Council will be Tuesday, January 25 at 4:00 p.m. to review the preliminary presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.