

Tuition Policy Advisory
Meeting Notes
May 4, 2005

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Wednesday, May 4, 2005 in 510 Rudder Tower. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Guest: President Robert M. Gates.

Several of the Council members are in the process of transitioning with the newly elected members of their positions on campus. Therefore, the members who are rotating off the Council brought their successors to the meeting and introductions were made.

Dr. Gates stated that the Tuition Policy Advisory Council is one of the most important ongoing committees for students and as such, seven of the fifteen members are students. Also serving on the Council is one former student and one Aggie Mom.

In the Legislature, Senator Rodney Ellis introduced a bill which would have deregulated tuition examined by a legislative committee with the possibility of revoking deregulated tuition. The bill has been passed by the Senate but is not likely to pass in the House. Since the inception of tuition deregulation, The University of Texas at Austin has had a 104% increase in tuition, followed by the University of Houston and The University of Texas at Arlington, while Texas A&M University has increased tuition by 61%. The Appropriations Bill has yet to be finalized and currently in the Senate, the appropriations for the Texas A&M have increased by \$7 million from the appropriations of the last biennium, while in the House, the appropriations for the University have decreased by \$32 million. It is not anticipated that the University will receive a budget cut, but it is unknown how much of the requested \$20 million will be approved until the Appropriations Bill has passed. It is also unknown how much of a tuition increase will be necessary. If the Legislature must go into Special Session to approve the appropriations, Texas A&M University may have to set a higher tuition rate and then adjust if the funds are approved from the Legislature.

In the Fall, Dr. Gates will review with the Tuition Policy Advisory Council where the budget is. The second year of the biennium has been capped at no more than a 10% increase in tuition. Some of the Deans are discussing differential tuition for their colleges, which is a topic the Council will have to consider in the near future.

Details of the appeals panel are still to be decided, such as whether and how much of a disincentive there should be for students staying in school beyond the fifth year.

Dr. Gates stated that he appreciates the members' willingness to serve on the Council and that the Council provides an insight into the budgets and workings of the University.

A long-term benefit of flat tuition to the University that has not been mentioned is formula-funded weighted semester credit hours. Because of capped enrollment, the share of formula funding to Texas A&M University has been decreasing. Flat tuition would have provided an

additional \$20 million in appropriations from the State if all Freshmen had taken 15 semester credit hours and all other students take one additional course during the current base period.

It was reported that an appeals panel is currently in place to hear issues relating to the \$1,000 rebate and the three-peat rule. A draft of the format for the tuition appeals panel was distributed for review. It was suggested that the panel appoint an advocate for the students to guide them through the appeals process. Excluding the Chair, the membership of the panel should be kept private to reduce potential outside pressure. Under the proposed setup, the panel's first meeting of the semester would take place after the add/drop period, which could create a burden for a student appealing tuition. If a student registered for only 12 hours in anticipation of having the appeal approved would not have the opportunity to add a class if the appeal were rejected. Conversely, a student who was registered for 15 hours and had the appeal approved would not be able to drop the course. The recommendation was made that the panel may need to meet in mid-August to consider appeals for the Fall. An addition will be made to the procedures that states that the Chair can convene the panel whenever needed.

It was suggested that the students meet to develop the appeals form and formulate the appeals guidelines for the Council to build upon. It would be beneficial to the students if information regarding the appeals process could be advertised to the students before the end of this semester. However, since that is not possible, information will be posted on the Student Government Association web site as to the location of the appeals panel web site where students may check throughout the summer for information that will be posted there as it becomes available, such as instructions and the appeals form. Advisors will also need access to the information so that they have knowledge of the process.

It is likely that a student rule will have to be created and the information will need to be submitted to the Faculty Senate for their June meeting.

It was asked that the wording under Procedures be changed to add that graduate students need to seek assistance from the Office of Graduate Studies before going to the Bursar's Office or the Registrar's Office to process an appeal.

The ability or need to convene all of the advisory members of the panel at one time was discussed and it was decided that the Chair will have adequate prior input from the advisory members to determine who, if any, of the advisory members need to be present at each of the appeals meetings.

The Council agreed that the members of the appeals panel should sign a confidentiality statement because of the sensitivity of information they will have access to. Students submitting an appeal should be required to certify that the information provided is factual and that falsified information could be cause for dismissal from the University.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.