

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
October 21, 2005

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

Guests: G. Kemble Bennett, Vice Chancellor & Dean of the Dwight Look College of Engineering.

Enrollment management programs are in place in three colleges within the University: Architecture, Business and Engineering. The Mays Business School has a very large minors program, so the school has many students taking courses who are enrolled in another college within the University. Also, the Mays Business School and the Dwight Look College of Engineering do not use many course fees. Most of the existing course fees are usually for labs. Differential tuition might better balance the cost of each student's education.

Discussion was begun on a proposed plan to charge differential tuition in the Mays Business School. A booklet was distributed which contains information on Texas A&M University semester credit hours; tuition costs of the Vision 2020 schools, the Big XII, and Texas institutions of higher education; and the issues and recommendations of the Mays Business School Differential Tuition sub-committee. This committee was charged to answer questions such as should differential tuition be charged on a course-by-course basis or a flat fee per student? Should differential tuition apply only to entering freshmen? The committee considered charging a different rate for each class of students but determined that it might stir animosity among students sitting in the same classroom who are being charged different amounts to take the very same class at the same time.

Texas A&M University has very low tuition costs relative to the Vision 2020 schools. Comparing tuition and/or fees with other institutions can be difficult because universities across the country combine tuition and fees in different ways, so realistic comparisons are often difficult. The University of Texas charges a different tuition rate for each of its colleges. During the last biennium, UT ran a flat tuition pilot program in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences, which resulted in an increase of approximately .5 semester credit hours for each student enrolled in the university. Kem Bennett announced that Engineering is beginning to look at the possibility of charging differential tuition, and the college is beginning peer comparisons to see what other institutions are doing in this area. Dr. Bennett will form a committee similar to that of the Business School to determine the feasibility of such a proposal.

It is sometimes difficult to compete with institutions that have more capital to spend on programs. However, there are institutions charging more than Texas A&M but who are ranked worse, so money is not the only concern when desiring to improve a program's rankings. Revenue from differential tuition could be used to establish learning communities and tracking students' success. Additionally, more small classes and fewer large classes could be offered.

Most of the students impacted by differential tuition would be juniors and seniors because that is the time when most students are taking classes in their major. Concern was voiced that lower income students might be priced out of their desired fields of study. For every dollar of tuition raised, 18% is set aside for financial aid and he went on to suggest that perhaps these funds could be set aside per college for use within that college.

All colleges within the University that are interested in implementing differential tuition will need to make a presentation to the Tuition Policy Advisory Council. Architecture is one of the colleges considering the possibility and the Mays Business School would like to implement in September, 2007. Proposals to the Council need to include the who, what, when, why. For instance, the following questions should be answered:

- Who (which colleges) want to implement differential tuition?
- What would the tuition rate be?
- What is the amount of revenue that would be generated?
- What would be done with the revenue?
- When would the implementation take place?
- How much financial aid would be realized?
- What would the benefits be to the students?
- What would the benefits be to the college?
- What makes differential tuition work at other universities or why hasn't it worked?

It was asked that each college considering charging differential tuition should also consider how the current situation could be optimized. Could some course fees be reduced and replaced by differential tuition?

If students increase the number of semester credit hours taken, then weighted semester credit hours also increase, thereby increasing the amount of State subvention that the University receives.

Discussion was begun on creating a Tuition Policy Advisory Council web page. Pictures of the University's home page of the web, as well as the web page of the Executive Vice President and Provost were distributed for discussion. A "hot link" to the TPAC web site could be placed on the University's home page. A link should also be provided at the "Current Students" site. Information on the TPAC web site should include the charge by President Gates to the Council, the membership of the Council, and the minutes from each meeting. A web master from University Relations could help design the page to coordinate with the rest of the University's web pages. This individual could also update/maintain the web site. Several Council members volunteered to serve on a sub-committee to develop the web page. The sub-committee will plan to meet next week.

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The update on energy costs reported that utilities were being purchased on a daily basis in September. The daily expenditures for electricity and natural gas were distributed. Approximately \$6 million was spent.

It is anticipated that the Student Fee Committee will confer with the Tuition Policy Advisory Council so that the two groups do not work at cross purposes. The Fee Committee calendar was provided to the TPAC members. The Board of Regents determines the timeline for budget items to be presented to the Board so the Fee Committee must work within the confines of this timeframe. Therefore, it is expected that Council will have the fee recommendations available for discussion at the November 11 TPAC meeting and that Dr. Gates will be able to review the fee recommendations by December 2. The Fee Committee is going to look at account balances for units wanting to raise fees. This will help determine the need/validity of a fee increase for that particular unit.

The next Tuition Policy Advisory Council meeting will be on Friday, November 11 at 3:00 p.m. Fee recommendations will be discussed and the Time to Graduation “incentive” charge also needs to be addressed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.