

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
April 28, 2006

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, April 28, 2006 in the Provost's Conference Room, 9th floor, Rudder Tower.

Guests: Charles Johnson, Dean of Liberal Arts; Leann South, Director of College Relations for Liberal Arts; Tom Regan, Dean of Architecture; Craig Griffith, Assistant Dean for Architecture; Doug Palmer, Dean of Education and Human Development; and Deborah Wright, Director of Budgets.

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

The incoming student leaders and the new President of the Federation of Texas A&M University Mothers' Clubs were introduced and welcomed to the Council.

President Gates has delayed the implementation of differential tuition until Fall 2008. A spreadsheet was distributed that was sent to the State Controller that depicts the breakdown of undergraduate resident tuition and required fees by semester credit hour at Texas A&M University. It was pointed out that the cost per hour increases by more than \$200 every hour up to, and including, 12 hours. Beyond 12 hours, the cost is only an additional \$50 for every hour thereafter.

The Council began discussion of the differential tuition proposals with the proposal submitted by the Mays Business School. The Mays Business School response to the differential tuition update requested by President Gates was distributed to the Council for review. Discussion ensued among the members of TPAC whether the Mays Business School should charge differential tuition by the semester credit hour, or by the course, or whether it should be charged when a student is admitted into the upper division courses. Charging by the course is more in line with the methodology of the current tuition policy. The Council was reminded that differential tuition would be limited to students taking majors courses, so it would make the most sense to charge per course. The funds collected from differential tuition will stay within the college and it is not anticipated that the differential tuition rate would increase in the near term. The Dean of the Mays Business School is getting feedback from students as to what areas to expand the course offerings.

Dean Regan was invited to present the differential tuition proposal from the College of Architecture. The Dean reported that the college has the largest architecture program of its kind in the nation. All of the students within the college are required to use very high tech equipment and many students must design digital images. A large portion of the enhancement fee pays for equipment. The college now requires all entering freshmen to provide their own laptop computers, which is reducing the need for many computer labs and associated equipment. Therefore, the College of Architecture would like to change enhancement fees to differential tuition for students within the college. Students outside of the college taking architecture courses would continue to pay the enhancement fee and not differential tuition. This strategy is cost

neutral, but would provide flexibility with the funds available to hire additional faculty, especially for summer school. Money would also then be available for students who are required to attend professional conferences. Differential tuition would also create set-asides for scholarships. Better regulation is also anticipated because tuition is more closely scrutinized than fees. The enhancement fee that will continue to be paid by the students outside of the college will still be used to purchase equipment, as necessary. Dean Regan stated that differential tuition within the College of Architecture would need to be charged by the semester credit hour because not all courses are three hours.

The proposal has been discussed with various student groups and the majority appear to be in favor. It was suggested that it may be best to continue charging the enhancement fee to graduate students since their tuition is so much higher already. Even though the cost remains the same, the perception would be that tuition has increased dramatically. Concern was expressed that a portion of the funds paid by all students through differential tuition would be used for a small group of students to attend conferences, so there appears to be some unequal benefit.

The Council then heard from Dean Johnson regarding the differential tuition proposal for the College of Liberal Arts. Dr. Johnson stated that differential tuition would provide funding for four initiatives:

1. First Year Experience—dedicated courses would be offered that would provide a connection with faculty.
2. Thematically Linked Classes—disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning communities would be created.
3. Off-Campus Academic Experience—more internships and study abroad programs could be offered.
4. Inquiry-Based Class—senior seminars, independent study, research and writing intensive courses, and senior thesis could be enhanced as a result of additional funding.

The basic plan for differential tuition in the College of Liberal Arts would be to charge \$30/SCH for all upper division liberal arts courses, capping the cost at 9 SCH. All upper division students and liberal arts majors would benefit from the revenue generated and additional scholarships would be created as a result of the additional set-asides. The proposal calls for a two year freeze on upper division course fees after differential tuition has been approved for the college. Dr. Johnson also reported that he has established a Tuition and Fees Advisory Council consisting of students, faculty and staff to advise the Dean. It is estimated that the additional revenue generated by differential tuition would be about \$2.5 million. These funds would be used to create smaller classes, more course offerings, lower student-faculty ratios, and expanded off-campus experiences.

Concern was raised that since the college teaches so many non-majors, the benefit may not correlate to those non-majors. Dean Johnson assured the Council that the non-majors would benefit from greater course offerings and smaller class sizes. The initiatives are important and the incremental cost is small.

Dean Palmer announced that the College of Education and Human Development would like to exchange some distance education fees for differential tuition. The students would benefit from the greater fund flexibility by increased access to distance education courses, increased course offerings, and scholarships that would result from the set-asides.

The Council raised concern that since different courses have different fees, charging differential tuition would, in essence, become variable differential tuition. Various suggestions were offered that might alleviate this problem: a tuition range could be implemented, a set amount of tuition could be charged for all courses plus a variable difference in course fees for the various courses, or a set amount could be charged for all courses. Dr. Palmer stated that he would run numbers for the various scenarios and report the outcomes back to the Council.

After hearing all of the proposals from the various colleges, the Tuition Policy Advisory Council Chair asked the Council to discuss concerns anyone may have regarding the proposals, starting with the College of Architecture. To date, the college has not submitted a formal, written proposal to the Council. Therefore, the Council will require the College of Architecture to supply a written proposal that should include very specific information on how differential tuition would be charged, a detailed budget, and the benefits that the students would realize. Council members raised concern that since differential tuition would be charged to students in the college and an enhancement fee would be charged to students outside of the college that students in the same class could be charged different amounts for the same class because the rates for tuition may increase at a different rate than that of enhancement fees.

Members of the Council would like to see universal overriding differential tuition guidelines for all colleges. Problems may arise for students earning an interdisciplinary degree because they could be charged differential tuition from a variety of colleges at the same time.

Many of the Council expressed discomfort with the proposal from the College of Education and Human Development because it could eliminate live courses in order to generate more funds through distance courses; the college appears to be requesting variable differential tuition; and start-up costs for courses are expensive, then the cost diminishes, however, the differential tuition would remain the same. This proposal may make it difficult for the students to see a direct benefit of differential tuition within the college.

A lengthy discussion ensued among the Council whether differential tuition should be uniform throughout the colleges, irrespective of individual or unique needs within a particular college. Standards could be established that the colleges would have to abide by. It was also suggested that each college should establish a review committee for tuition and fee accountability that would have to report to TPAC on a yearly basis.

There were some questions about the minutes from the December 15, 2005 TPAC meeting. The minutes report that the Council voted and approved the Mays Business School differential tuition proposal to go forward to President Gates. However, some of the members believed that the vote was to approve the concept of differential tuition in general and not specifically for the Mays Business School.

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TPAC will meet next week on May 4 to discuss differential tuition in general and in principle, followed by a discussion of the Mays Business School differential tuition proposal specifically.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.