

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
May 4, 2006

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Thursday, May 4, 2006 in the Provost's Conference Room, 9th floor, Rudder Tower.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m.

It was reported that the various Deans have been contacted that any decision regarding differential tuition in their colleges has been deferred.

Since the meeting last week, a list of questions have been developed that are aimed at addressing the concerns expressed by the Council of the proposals that have been submitted thus far, such as graduate students in Architecture, treatment of continuing fees, and sources of revenue for raises that will be needed for the new faculty hired from the revenue from differential tuition. The Council was asked to review the questions and make suggestions regarding wording or additional questions that need to be addressed. After the Council has developed the list of questions, the questions will be forwarded to the colleges expressing interest in submitting proposals for differential tuition. Answering the questions should help the colleges develop a more complete proposal.

The Council discussed that colleges should not necessarily need to forego fees in order to charge differential tuition. However, if differential tuition is charged to all students, some will not receive the benefit incurred within the college. Additionally, if differential tuition is added to high course fees, then the cost of an education becomes prohibitive very quickly.

Course fees were implemented because additional tuition could not be charged at that time. Historically, course fees have proven difficult because they are all different and students perceive them as a hidden charge and do not associate a benefit with the cost. Exchanging course fees for differential tuition is a good argument because it provides flexibility for the funds to be used where the money is really needed.

The mission of the University is to achieve the Vision 2020 goal of becoming a top ten university. Achieving this goal requires additional funding, but the University must be able to justify the increase in cost with a proportional increase in value. Texas A&M University must also ensure that access to college is not being limited by the increasing cost of attendance.

Colleges may not want to include proposed incremental increases of fixed costs in the proposals because it could prove limiting. On the other hand, justifiable causes such as increased salaries, etc. would be good to know up front. However, differential tuition should not be set at one amount and then raise course fees equal to a different amount, which would cause students taking the same course to be charged different amounts.

Charging differential tuition for research hours could create difficulties for graduate students because they must take research hours in the summer to retain assistantships. Questions were added to the list to inquire whether research hours would be included and if so, what would the benefit be to those students.

An additional question to add to the list regarding student involvement at the college-level would be to ask how students would be involved when future increases are requested. TPAC would like to recommend that colleges create college-level tuition policy councils to review future requests before they are forwarded to this Council.

An inquiry was made as to whether differential tuition should be considered for professional schools only. The Council was reminded that President Gates asked TPAC to review requests from all colleges that express interest, not limited to professional schools.

The outcome of the differential tuition request from the Mays Business School discussed at the December 15, 2005 meeting was again brought up. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the December vote would stand and that no additional discussion was needed.

The TPAC Chair thanked the members for all of their hard work during this past year and for serving on the Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.