

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
November 7, 2007

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Wednesday, November 7, 2007 in the Provost's Conference Room, 9th floor, Rudder Tower.

Present: Dan Parker (Chair), Michelle Berry, Bruce Edwards, Ricky Griffin, Nick Guillemette, Shari Hilding-Kronforst, Tyler Koch, Joe Pettibon (ex-officio), Conner Prochaska, Lynn Ruoff, Kathy Steffen, Van Taylor for Bill Flores, and Deborah Wright (ex-officio).

Absent: Jonathon Glueck, Marty Gunn, and Anne Rabalais.

Guests: Bob Piwonka, Executive Director of Student Business Services; and Alice Reinarz, Assistant Provost for Enrollment.

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

Dan Parker stated that there were two main items to consider at today's meeting: determining the format by which differential tuition should be charged, e.g. by course, by major, upper division only or include lower division; and processing each individual proposal to determine the merit for charging differential tuition in that college. It is important to make sure that students would not be double-billed by implementing a variety of differential tuition methods and the students paying the differential tuition should reap the benefits. It was suggested that perhaps a pilot program would be prudent to determine the effects that differential tuition would have on the campus body. It was determined that option would not be feasible as it would take a few years to study results and the results would vary by college. The Council decided to review each proposal before determining a uniform format for which to charge differential tuition. Mr. Parker announced that the College of Geosciences withdrew its proposal at this time but may decide to come forward in the future. The college is small and it is difficult to generate revenue.

Dwight Look College of Engineering Differential Tuition Proposal

The proposed revenue generated from differential tuition would be used for financial aid, facilities maintenance and repair, equipment needs, enrichment of targeted programs, outreach specialist position, targeted scholarships, and potential faculty salary increases. A University Studies program exists in Engineering Technology, but not in the mainstream engineering program. The proposal called for \$495 in differential tuition per student per academic year, but this cost would need to be split into a per semester charge. It was noted that a semester cost will likely encourage students to graduate sooner than a charge by semester credit hour would. The Council will need to address how part-time students would be affected.

The Council questioned how differential tuition revenue distribution and accountability will be handled in the future. It was noted that money needs to be set aside from differential tuition

revenue to offer faculty salary increases and operating costs. Bruce Edwards remarked that administration could make justification for differential tuition revenue usage part of the budget review process. Mr. Parker added that revenue from differential tuition must be kept separate for budgeting purposes anyway.

Conner Prochaska reported that the Engineering Student Council is putting all of their fundraising efforts into the fountain repair at Zachry, so building maintenance is important to students. Engineering students are informed about the proposal and what the funds would be used for and they are in favor. Mr. Parker remarked that no funds allocated from the State are appropriated for deferred building maintenance.

Members of the Council like the approach of charging differential tuition by major, but are not yet sure whether it would be more beneficial to charge all majors or limit it to upper division majors. It was noted that about 50% of students that begin their college career as engineering majors will change majors to another college by the time they reach upper division. However, funds are also being used for the lower division students so they also would receive the benefit of differential tuition revenue. Mr. Parker reminded members of the Council that TPAC voted two years ago to add differential tuition as part of the University's overall tuition policy; today's members must decide how it will be applied.

College of Education & Human Development Differential Tuition Proposal

The proposal is mostly revenue neutral because the college would be exchanging upper division course fees for differential tuition. The college would like the flexibility to use the funds where needed and differential tuition would generate additional scholarship funds which is very important. Course fees can be confusing to students and administratively difficult because students look at the flat rate of tuition and do not take course fees into consideration when adding a class so they do not understand the additional cost.

Mr. Parker stated that once the Council determines how differential tuition should be charged and what changes, if any, need to be made to the various proposals, the colleges will need to be informed and it will need to be determined how the changes would affect their program, as well as the changes that would be necessary to the differential tuition cost. The Council can recommend that colleges begin doing away with course fees and move to differential tuition.

Tyler Koch indicated that the education student senators are informed of the proposal and in favor of it. Even adding differential tuition, tuition in the College of Education is lower than at peer institutions.

Additional information is needed from the college regarding how the \$2.2 million in differential tuition will be used. The college also needs to consider what the cost would be by semester for all majors, as well as only for upper division majors, rather than charging by semester credit hour.

College of Liberal Arts Differential Tuition Proposal

Mr. Parker announced that Dean Johnson indicated that the proposal could be moved to major rather than charging by course. Course fees in the college are very small, on average only about \$5 per semester credit hour. Conner Prochaska and Tyler Koch reported that liberal arts students seem to be rather “middle of the road” in their thoughts regarding differential tuition, many students seem unaware of the proposal.

Michelle Berry stated that many sections of liberal arts courses are already small classes so that may not be a good use for differential tuition, however, additional scholarships would be available and it is anticipated that study abroad would be expanded. Sometimes, it is difficult to get into a particular liberal arts course, so added sections would be helpful. The majority of peer institutions do not charge differential tuition.

The Council would like additional information from the college regarding what the impact would be to the differential tuition cost if course fees were incorporated, how many students study abroad per semester, what peer institutions charge, what the class sizes are.

College of Architecture Differential Tuition Proposal

The college has managed enrollment, yet is the largest college of architecture in the country. The proposal calls for the differential tuition revenue to be returned to the department earning it. When the college originally came to TPAC, the proposal called for exchanging course fees for differential tuition for the needed flexibility to enhance the programs and bring in visiting professors, which is so important to the education of architectural students.

The Council sensed a lack of accountability in the proposal because no revenue breakdown was provided. The college will be asked to provide how much funding would be spent in each of the four broad areas specified in the proposal: specialized faculty, enhanced graduation rates, increased national and international experiences, and increased quality.

Bob Piwonka will bring to the next meeting a course fee schedule for all of the colleges.

As a very rough estimate, it was determined that the lowest to highest college costs at Texas A&M University are as follows: education, liberal arts, science, agriculture, business, architecture, and engineering.

Feedback regarding summer school has been phenomenal, according to the students members of TPAC. Departments will need to know what classes need to be offered that will encourage students to enroll for the second summer session.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.