

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
November 14, 2007

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 in the Provost's Conference Room, 9th floor, Rudder Tower.

Present: Dan Parker (Chair), Justin Bellamy for Nick Guillemette, Michelle Berry, Bruce Edwards, Jonathon Glueck, Ricky Griffin, Nick Guillemette, Marty Gunn, Tyler Koch, Conner Prochaska, Lynn Ruoff, Kathy Steffen, Van Taylor for Bill Flores, and Deborah Wright (ex-officio).

Absent: Nick Guillemette, Shari Hilding-Kronforst, 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 remarked that it is difficult to place all of the colleges into one category. For example, if differential tuition were to be charged to all majors and course fees are rolled in, the cost could get extremely high, especially for the College of Education and Human Development because approximately 19,000 students take kinesiology courses each semester that majors would have to subsidize. This college would be better suited to charge differential tuition only to upper division students.

There are two main discussion points today: 1) how to charge differential tuition and, 2) review each individual proposal for merit. From discussions of previous meetings, it appears that the Council is leaning toward recommending differential tuition be charged by major. An advantage of charging by major would be that a student would be paying for the diploma not the course and this method is consistent with flat tuition. A student would not be charged differential tuition more than once. When a student takes 15 or more hours each semester and designated tuition does not increase, it would become extremely difficult to determine which college would not receive differential tuition.

Mr. Parker mentioned that the topic of differential tuition was discussed at the Finance Council meeting today. There is concern regarding set-asides for student financial aid from differential tuition charged by the course because that money must stay within the college generating the funds, which would benefit majors in that college and not necessarily the students paying for it.

Charging differential tuition by course creates the mindset of different costs to students for the same course. Students may also avoid taking the more expensive courses.

If course fees were incorporated into differential tuition for college majors, the Student Information Management System (SIMS) would have great difficulty assessing course fees to

one student in a class, e.g. a non-major, and not assessing the same fee to another student in the same course, e.g. a college major. However, the system could accommodate differential tuition with course fees included if applied to upper division courses, but majors would, in essence, be subsidizing course fees for non majors. Under this scenario, differential tuition would need to be based by course rather than by major. Course fees originated before differential and designated tuition was available. The Council may need to move slowly to eliminate course fees.

The University does not currently know how many students will participate in the University Studies program, so tuition specifically affecting that program will need to be a topic for future TPAC meetings. The Mays Business School has a significant minors program but these students would not pay differential tuition under the methods currently being deliberated. This is another topic for future meetings.

Bob Piwonka reported that appeals regarding flat rate tuition have greatly diminished, mainly because it seems that students are planning ahead.

Appropriations from the State Legislature as a percent of the E&G budget have been declining greatly in the last couple of decades, so the University must offset these funds with tuition increases. Mr. Parker acknowledged that recommending the implementation of differential tuition is a difficult decision because it is hard to know where differential tuition revenue will be used in future years, but the Council can only make decisions based on current information.

The Council discussed the relevance of charging differential tuition to all majors or only to upper division majors within a college. Alice Reinartz pointed out that there are clear and consistent student migration patterns from certain colleges to others. A handout depicting the migration of "first-time in college" students at Texas A&M University was distributed to the Council. The chart also clearly indicates that students are much more stable within a major during the third and fourth years. Four year graduation rates are improving, most likely as a result of tuition policy. Some students come to college with enough Advanced Placement (AP) college credit in hand to be considered U3 and would therefore immediately begin paying differential tuition. Some of the AP credit may not be related to the major of choice, but students would not have to claim those classes. However, if a student changes majors in which the AP credit would be beneficial, it is not clear whether he/she could go back and claim those credits at that time. It was noted that a very small number of students come to the University with enough AP credit to be placed in this type of situation. Dr. Gunn commented that a typical student comes to college with an average of about four AP and/or CLEP hours. The State Legislature has told universities to reduce the number of hours required for a degree and to develop tuition plans which encourage faster graduation rates. When students stay longer at a university, it keeps other students from having the opportunity to enroll. The Council does not want students to choose a major as freshmen simply because it might be cheaper. The option of charging differential tuition for only four semesters was discussed, but that would create great difficulty when considering withdrawal, internship, co-op, etc. It was suggested that differential tuition be charged only for 300-400 level courses, but that would cause differential tuition to be charged by course rather than by major. Another suggestion was a graduation fee related to the degree rather than

charging differential tuition, however, this would be similar to a balloon payment, which might place many students in hardship because it would be more difficult to plan for. Mr. Parker reminded the Council that it is impossible to find a perfect fit for all students, but rather to find the best fit for the majority of students. Charging differential tuition to U3-U4 students is consistent with the goal of improved graduation rates, but engineering, for example, may have a large number of students at the U4 level for two years.

Mr. Parker announced that the Council will need to make a recommendation about charging differential tuition during the summer sessions. The Council determined that not charging differential tuition during summer school might encourage students to enroll during the summer term and it might provide an opportunity for students who have changed majors to “catch up”.

TPAC has four main decisions to make regarding differential tuition:

1. To charge by major or by course
2. To charge all students or upper division students only
3. To roll course fees in or leave separate
4. To charge during summer school or not

Conner Prochaska moved that TPAC recommend differential tuition be charged to undergraduate majors within the college once they reach U3 classification. The motion was seconded by Tyler Koch and all present voting members of TPAC voted in favor of the motion.

Lynn Ruoff moved that TPAC recommend students be exempt from paying differential tuition during the summer sessions. Conner Prochaska seconded the motion. Six members voted for, two opposed and one abstained.

Martyn Gunn moved that TPAC recommend course fees remain separate from differential tuition; Jonathon Glueck seconded the motion and eight members were in favor and one abstained.

Based on these decisions, the context for the college proposals will be to charge differential tuition by major upon U3 classification. Course fees will not become part of differential tuition and differential tuition will not be charged during the summer sessions.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, November 28 and the Council will review the individual proposals.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.