AGENDA FOR MEETING OF BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM

Date: Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Place: Board Meeting Room, Ninth Floor, Ashbel Smith Hall, 201 West Seventh Street, U. T. System Administration, Austin, Texas

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ANNUAL MEETING WITH OFFICERS OF THE U. T. SYSTEM STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council will meet with the Board to discuss accomplishments of the Council and plans for the future.

AGENDA

1. Executive and Standing Committee Member Introductions

2. Chairperson’s Report and Overview

3. Executive Committee and Standing Committee Remarks and Recommendations

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The University of Texas System Student Advisory Council was established in 1989 to provide input to the U. T. Board of Regents working through and with the Chancellor and U. T. System Administration on issues of student concern. The operating guidelines of the Council require that recommendations have a multi
component focus and that the Council explore individual campus issues with component administrators prior to any consideration. The Student Advisory Council consists of three student representatives from each U. T. System component institution enrolling students and meets quarterly, usually in Austin. The Standing Committees of the Council are: Academic Affairs, Campus Life, Finance and Planning, Health and Graduate Affairs, Legislative Affairs, and Technology/Facilities Planning.

The Student Advisory Council met April 4-5, 2003, to finalize their recommendations as set forth on Pages 3 - 10 prior to the May 2003 meeting of the U. T. Board of Regents.

Council members scheduled to attend are:

**Chair:** Mr. Eric Opiela, U. T. Austin, Third Year Graduate Student, Law School

**Vice-Chair:** Mr. Alan Thomas, U. T. Tyler, Third Year Graduate Student, Sociology

**Administrative Assistant:** Ms. Semilla Rivera, U. T. Health Science Center - Houston, Third Year Graduate Student, Epidemiology

**Historian:** Ms. Debra Perez, U. T. Brownsville, Junior, Criminal Justice

**Academic Affairs Committee:** Mr. Elliott Kruppa, U. T. Austin, Senior, Finance

**Campus Life Committee:** Ms. Kendra Ray, U. T. Dallas, Senior, Business Management

**Finance and Planning Committee:** Mr. Dean Blount, U. T. Health Science Center - San Antonio, Second Year Graduate Student, M.S. in Nursing as Family Nurse Practitioner

**Health and Graduate Affairs Committee:** Ms. Rabea Benhalim, U. T. Dallas, Junior, Literary Studies, Government and Politics (reporting for Mr. Donald Stepan, U. T. Southwestern Medical Center - Dallas, Fourth Year Medical Student)

**Legislative Affairs Committee:** Ms. Rabea Benhalim, U. T. Dallas, Junior, Literary Studies, Government and Politics

**Technology/Facilities Planning Committee:** Mr. Justin Appleby, U. T. Dallas, Senior, Applied Mathematics
The University of Texas System
Student Advisory Council

2002-2003

Recommendations and Report to the

Board of Regents

of the

University of Texas System

May 7, 2003

Eric Opiela,
Chairman
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM

Student Advisory Council
Eric Opiela, Chairman
Main Building 2403
Austin, Texas 78712
512/791-6336

The Honorable Charles Miller
Chairman, University of Texas System Board of Regents
601 Colorado St.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Chairman Miller:

As the 2002-2003 term of the University of Texas System Student Advisory Council draws to a close, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the council as well as the unmet challenges for which the students of the University of Texas System need your help and the help of the UT System Administration to continue meeting our constitutional mandate to “create a University of the First Class for the People of Texas.”

Contained in the attached report are both our recommendations and a record of accomplishments for the past academic year. We ask that the members of the Board of Regents, as well as the Chancellor and his staff, carefully review and consider these, as they represent the collective voice of the students enrolled in our great University System. As you well know, each academic and health component of the UT System send three delegates to the Student Advisory Council, most of whom are the elected representatives of their respective student bodies. These students truly and deeply care about the future of their institutions, and have dedicated substantial amounts of time this past year to contribute solutions to the problems facing UT System components. A number of the enclosed recommendations call for increased student contributions toward solving university problems that affect student life. While some might argue that students are neither interested in nor should rightfully play a role in university decisionmaking due to academic obligations, I posit a counterargument: Students are interested in making their university a better place, and derive significant academic and other developmental benefits from meaningful involvement in their university’s decisionmaking processes. In addition, I am confident that when students are engaged in their university, rather than marginalized, they will remain as dedicated alumni as they move into their professional careers, rather than become disenchanted and forswear their alma mater.

Texas needs leaders for the 21st Century. Let us do our best to work together to develop these leaders while “creating a University of the First Class.”

Sincerely yours,

Eric Opiela
UTSSAC Chair, 2002-2003
Finance and Planning/Technology and Planning Committees
RECOMMENDATION

Students desire a proactive role in the planning and fiscal affairs that affect their component. Student leaders on component campuses know that many planning and fiscal needs are complicated and require a significant amount of background knowledge. They are willing to take the time to learn the issues in order to be a cogent participant in discussions. Such time is not only well spent as an educational student self-governance activity, but is also an important skill-building exercise as they prepare to enter the professional world they are currently studying. With this knowledge, the UTSSAC Finance and Planning Committee/Technology and Planning Committee presents the following recommendation for review and consideration:

That the UT System implement a policy such that each component will identify at least one student as a Presidential Advisor to ensure that the students of that component will be represented on all relevant committees; to ensure that student input is received at all levels and to ensure that information on issues of importance to the student population will be disseminated.

BACKGROUND

With the multitude of projects and changes under consideration at individual components at any one time, the current system of obtaining student input and keeping students informed about the issues is ineffective. System components currently deal with the issues of student involvement with attitudes that vary widely from embracing to ignoring. For example, The Office of Student Services of some components do not include students in the planning for distribution of student fees while others have anywhere between five and twelve student members on their student fees advisory committees.

Each component has different needs and issues but all of those needs and issues affect the student population. It is imperative that there be a student representative at every component involved at the Presidential level, as a reasoned, informed voice to ensure that the student voices are heard and stand ready to respond to the complex planning and fiscal issues of their component.
Health and Graduate Affairs Committee
RECOMMENDATION

The UTSSAC Health and Graduate Affairs Committee presents the following recommendations for review and consideration.

Health Insurance
- It is recommended that at the next review period for health insurance that UT-System continue to select as a base a policy that maintains at least the current levels with improved customer service.
- Additionally, covered students should be given insurance cards, better descriptions of coverage levels, and improved explanations of acquiring benefits and using website.
- It is requested that any new policy allow individual students to select additional coverage and upgrade. Additional options for instance could improve or expand to dependent care, preventative care, and prescription drugs.

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants
- The ability to recruit good graduate students depends to a large extent on the benefits package offered to them.
- We do not support the legislative proposal that medical coverage be discontinued as part of benefits for those who work less than 40 hours.
- We recommend that the medical benefits package be given to all graduate TAs, RAs, and AIs, as well as fellowship holders.
- Although the current financial situation does not warrant tuition waivers or reimbursement, the issue should continue to be addressed as a valid need in UT System.
- We do not support the legislative proposal that graduate student employees and fellowship holders no longer receive tuition waivers of out of state tuition rates.

Advancement of UT-System
- We request that UT System develop long term plans to pursue increased research funding for all components from existing levels.
- We support the proposal to have a consultant recommend to the Chancellor how to move UTA, UTD, UTEP, and UTSA up to research funding of at least $100 million.
- We recognize that increased research funding may involve collaborations between components and health centers to get to higher levels of research funding.
- We recommend that when UT-System submits and pursues researching grants, the priority and weight of which institutions get funds can be changed to be equitable across system. It is recognized that once a government or private grant is conferred to an institution that funding may not be reassigned.
- We request that UT System develop a plan to create at least one additional law school in underrepresented regions. A law school at either UT El Paso or UT Brownsville would encourage legal students in these areas to apply locally with the hope that they would remain in the area and establish their practices there.
- By the year 2005, the El Paso/Juarez metroplex population is expected to exceed 2.5 million people, and this makes this area the largest international border
community in the world. El Paso alone is the 19th largest city in the United States. The area is currently deficient in legal counsel, and by establishing a local program, residents would have better access to qualified counsel. The law school would also attract increased funding, decrease the loss of future professionals to other areas, and generate revenue for the area. The UTEP library has a collection of over 13,000 legal texts and close to 30 pallets of additional legal resources currently unshelved. A law librarian is also employed to help students identify legal texts. Furthermore, there are two law magnets high schools in El Paso. At UTEP, continuing legal education courses are offered for local law professionals. UTEP also provides the Law School Preparation Institute, which is a summer program for students interested in attending law school. UTEP already has qualified faculty holding law degrees. A number of activities that promote law studies are offered such as seminars, conferences with judges, lawyers, and law school representatives.

- The Valley is the third fastest growing region in the United States. 3.5 million people live in South Texas. Only 15 advanced degrees are offered in the region. There are two established universities within 45 minutes from the UTB that have joint pre-law and criminal justice programs.

Academic Affairs Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: We, the members of the Academic Affairs committee of UTSSAC, strongly recommend that a system wide academic integrity statement be implemented. We recommend the following statement:

"By upholding honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility, we strive to create a community that promotes ethical behavior, upholds equality of opportunity, strengthens the integrity of the institution, fosters pride in the university, and inspires individuals towards a life-long commitment to honor."

Recommendations for the Application of the Statement include: (a) Upon admittance, (b) at orientation, (c) administered before tests, (d) on the course syllabus or assignments, (e) or any other places deemed appropriate for the component.

This is based on the five pillars from the Center for Academic Integrity, a consortium of over 225 academic institutions whose mission is to identify and affirm the values of academic integrity. It is also part of the proposed Academic Code of Conduct from the Senate of College Councils at U.T. Austin.
Student Evaluations of Faculty

**Course evaluations**: We, the members of the Academic Affairs subcommittee of UTSSAC, strongly recommend the tabulated results of the student course evaluations be made available to the public in a timely manner.

**Recommended places of postings include**: (a) Library, (b) Online, or (c) any other additional forms that would be easily accessible for students.

**Reasoning**: To enhance the overall quality of our education and ensure the highest standards of the U.T. system.

English Proficiency Test

**English Proficiency**: Effective communication is paramount to a quality education; therefore, all individuals teaching should be proficient in the English language. We, the members of the Academic Affairs subcommittee of UTSSAC, find that components are in varying degrees of compliance with the Texas Education Code. Section 51.917 of the Texas Education Code states plainly that public universities are required to provide a program or short course to ensure that all courses are taught clearly in the English language. After recognizing the same issue in 2001, the Chancellor stated, “All the components support the recommendation and have policies in place to comply with the requirement.” However, the committee feels that existing policies may not adequately address the problem.

**Recommendation**: In an effort to comply with the Texas Education Code, The University of Texas at Austin established the Center for Teaching Effectiveness that provides an English Certification Program for international teaching assistants and assistant instructors. The UTSSAC Academic Affairs Committee recommends the implementation of similar programs including all course instructors at other components.

Student Campus Life Committee

**RECOMMENDATION**

We, the Student Campus Life Subcommittee of UTSSAC, support the Faculty Advisory Council recommendation to implement an Executive Planning and Leadership Council at each System component. The structure of implementation may vary at each component. The Campus Life Committee is committed to the continued cooperation between faculty, staff, and students. By discussing concerns and issues as a group, all parties may help to bring students, faculty and staff closer and ultimately aid in the resolution of differences.
Legislative Affairs Committee
SUMMARY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tuition Deregulation

- We do not support tuition deregulation in any form. We recommend that control of tuition remain with the Texas Legislature at this time.

Student on Board of Regents

- We support and recommend that a student be appointed to the UT System Board of Regents as a voting member.
- We do not support discontinuation of the SAC at such a time as a student regent is added. UTSSAC is necessary to give components an opportunity to gather for sharing of ideas and make recommendations to the Board of Regents.

2002-2003 UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Social Security Number Task Force
At the October 2002 Board of Regents Committee Meetings, the Student Advisory Council identified the lack of security at many component institutions with regard to student Social Security Numbers as one of the items it was concerned with and working on. Through cooperation with UT System Administration, a Social Security Number Task Force was established in the Spring of 2003 to secure student and employee Social Security Numbers and reduce their use at UT System component institutions. This task force, which includes student representation from the SAC (Casey Mims, SAC Member and Student Body President, UT Permian Basin), will report to the Chancellor its findings and recommendations by the end of the 2002-2003 academic year.

Sharing of Ideas
As a new initiative this academic year, the Student Advisory Council sought to improve the sharing of ideas between students at UT System campuses. Through discussions at each SAC meeting, student leaders from all component campuses worked together to share ideas and solve problems faced by students on individual campuses.

Best Practices Pamphlet
To the same end as the sharing of ideas initiative, the Student Campus Life Committee of the Student Advisory Council has prepared a brochure detailing best practices in the formation and development of student organizations and student leadership. This brochure will be used across System to help students develop leadership and extracurricular activity organizational skills. It is hoped that this sharing of best practices will continue with the Council and expand during the 2003-2004 term.
**Student Representation**

The Student Advisory Council has continued to provide key input and representation on UT System committees and task forces. The formation by the Board of Regents this year of the Student Faculty and Staff Campus Life Committee is applauded by the Council as an important development in improving constituent representation and input to the Board on issues affecting campus life. Eric Opiela, UTSSAC Chair and Co-Chair of the UT Austin Graduate Student Assembly, served as the SAC’s representative to the Committee. In addition, the SAC provided representation to the aforementioned Social Security Number Task Force. Casey Mims, SAC Member and Student Body President, UT Permian Basin, served as the SAC’s representative to the Task Force. Throughout Summer 2003, the SAC will also provide input into certain portions of the revision process for the Regents’ Rules. Jeremy Chance, incoming SAC Chair, and President of the Student InterCouncil of the UT Houston Health Components, will coordinate this input process.