Faculty Senate Meeting – September 13, 2013 at 3:00 pm

E. E. O'Banion New Science Building, Room 123

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order by Senator Bentley at 3:15 p.m.

Item 1: Senate Update from Summer

Senator Bentley reported that on August 7 he and the speakers of other TAMUS faculty senates met with TAMUS Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, James Hallmark. During the meeting, it was agreed that the speakers would meet on a regular basis with Vice Chancellor Hallmark and the TAMUS Board of Regents. Senator Bentley reported that during the meeting he passed out information on equity raises, the University Climate Survey, and the issue of the Hempstead landfill. Senator Bentley reported that Speaker Derald Harp (TAMU-Commerce) noted that landfill was a federal issue rather than a TAMUS issue.

Senator Bentley reported that he discussed the issue of Hempstead landfill in a recent meeting with President Wright.

Senator Bentley reminded the senate that President Wright mentioned the possibility of merit raises this year at the Faculty and Staff Conference on August 21.

Item 2. Initiation of New Senators

Senator Bentley asked new senators to come before the senate body for induction. Senator Glenn inducted and swore in the new senators (see names below).

   Senator Terri B. Pantuso
   Senator G. Solomon Osho
   Senator Douglas Hermond

Item 3. Election of Officers

Senator Bentley summarized the issues related to officer elections held in the May meeting. Based on the fact that the senate roster included 43 senators, the 21 senators present at the May meeting did not constitute a quorum necessary to conduct official senate business. In addition, Senator Bentley noted that two members elected to the Executive Committee had since resigned their senate positions after being appointed as interim department heads within the Whitlowe R. Green College of Education: Dr. Lisa Hobson (elected Vice Speaker) and Dr. Angela Branch-Vital (elected Member-At-Large). Senator Bentley also noted that another officer-elect had resigned due to legal issues.
Senator Bentley asked for nominations for the position of Speaker of the Senate.

Senator Glenn called for a discussion of the elections that were held in the May meeting. He noted that none of the 2012-2013 senate meetings had quorums. (Attendance records indicate that the meetings for May 2012, January 2013, and February 2013 had the 22 senators necessary to constitute a quorum, but it is unclear whether those meetings were called to order before the quorum was actually established.) Senator Glenn noted that throughout 2012-2013, including the May meeting, the senate operated with the understanding that the Speaker could call a meeting to order regardless of attendance and, in doing so, declare a quorum for conducting official senate business. For this reason, he argued, the May officer elections should be considered valid.

Senator Bentley responded that he declared a quorum at certain meetings where a majority of the senate body was not present but vital senate business needed to be conducted, but that he did not declare a quorum at all senate meetings. Senator Bentley cited the April meeting as one at which he declared a quorum, but asserted that he did not declare a quorum at the May meeting.

Senator Glenn responded that it was his understanding that the Speaker had declared a quorum at the May meeting as well as all other meetings, and that he had undertaken his duties as Parliamentarian with that understanding.

Senator Hooper asked if the Senate Constitution and Bylaws actually allow the Speaker to simply declare a quorum when a majority of the senate body is not in attendance. Senator Hooper also asked why there was a discrepancy between the senate roster posted on the webpage (counting 43 senators) and the roster count of 40 that was provided at the May meeting. Senator Hooper noted that the webpage is not the official roster and asked what the official roster was for the May meeting.

Senator Aluka noted that is fundamentally unconstitutional to vote on whether a quorum is met and pointed out that the senate body, in May, was told that the senate roster included 40 senators instead of 43.

At the request of Senator Brown, Senator Glenn read the portion of the May minutes pertaining to the elections and their outcomes as well as the discussion of whether a quorum had been established. After reading from the May minutes, Senator Glenn stated that the Senate Bylaws and Robert's Rules dictate that a quorum is needed to call a meeting to order but not to hold elections.

Senator Williams inquired whether the senators elected to the Executive Committee in May are still serving. In response, Senator Glenn argued that all positions on the Executive Committee are filled except Speaker, Vice Speaker, and one Member-At-Large position. These three positions are open because the senators elected to those positions are no longer serving in the senate.
Senator Brown moved to hold elections to fill three open positions on the Executive Committee. Senator Aluka questioned whether a quorum was present to conduct official senate business.

Senator Musa noted that new members at the May meeting were deceived about various things and asserted that honesty is important in the process moving forward.

Senator Osho asked if the senators present could agree that the May elections were constitutional. He argued that the Speaker had called the May meeting to order, so the results from those elections should be considered valid. Senator Glenn clarified that the Speaker cannot call a meeting to order without a quorum but that elections can be held without a quorum.

Senator Williams apologized for the absence of Senator Booker, who was stuck in traffic and thus unable to attend the meeting. Senator Williams also noted that Senator Booker was not properly notified of the meeting. Senator Williams suggested the formation of a committee to clear up all confusions about the senate roster and organize the nomination and election process for the next meeting.

Senator Hooper pointed out that only 30 senators received the email notification of meeting from Senator Bentley.

Senator Hermond reminded the senate body that it cannot conduct official senate business without a proper quorum. Senator Aluka recommended that the bylaws be amended so that senate business can be conducted without a majority of the senators present.

Senator Stewart asked if nominations and elections can be held electronically, and Senator Glenn stated that the senate can conduct an official vote electronically. Senator Stewart pointed out that elections could be conducted using an online platform like SurveyMonkey, and Senator Hooper asked how nominations would be conducted. Senator Glenn suggested that nominations be taken at the current meeting and elections held electronically.

Senator Brown withdrew his motion to hold elections for three open positions on the Executive Committee and moved that a committee be created, with Senator Williams as Chair, to determine an accurate senate roster and organize elections for all positions on the Executive Committee. Senator Glenn seconded the motion. The motion passed with 13 for, 2 opposed.

Senator Aluka objected to holding the election electronically. Senator Glenn suggested that once the new committee establishes the proper senate membership, all present senators can work to rally other senators within their colleges to attend the next meeting. Senator Ciftja expressed doubts as whether this strategy would succeed.
Senator McMullen read the portion of the Senate Bylaws pertaining to special meetings. Citing the bylaws, Senator Glenn noted that 1/3 of the senate body can call a special meeting and moved that a special meeting be scheduled for 3pm on Friday, September 27, to hold nominations and elections for all positions on the Executive Committee. Senator Hooper seconded the motion. The motion passed with 15 in favor, none opposed.

**Item 4: Elections Committee**

Senator Williams requested that one senator from each college be included on the committee to establish senate membership. The committee was established as follows:

Senator Williams (Chair)
Senator Glenn (Education)
Senator Hooper (Arts and Sciences)
Senator Wienert (Architecture)
Senator Jackson (Nursing)
Senator Abrom-Johnson (Agriculture)
Senator Pendleton (Engineering)
Senator Osho (Juvenile Justice, appointed in absentia)
Senator Till (Business, appointed in absentia)

Senator Glenn suggested that if a quorum is not established at the special meeting, nominations will be taken and elections will then be held electronically.

Senator Pantuso moved to adjourn the meeting. Senator McMullen seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.