

**Natural Sciences and Mathematics Council
Meeting Minutes for September 6, 2011
Nik Podraza reporting**

Meeting Called to Order at approximately 4:30 PM by Chair Joe Schmidt.

Present: Dong, Plenefisch, Quinn, Schmidt, Bellizzi, Ronning, Krantz, Bossenbroek, Gottgens, Smith, Ellingson, Podraza, Denis White, Schwarz, Thompson, Weck-Schwarz, Harmych, Don White

Absent: none

Introductions were made (instead of complete roll call).

Minutes from the May 3rd Meetings were approved as posted.

David Krantz was elected as Vice-Chair / Chair Elect and Nik Podraza as Secretary.

Notes from Summer Council of Chairs Meetings were reported by Schmidt.

May 2011: A strategic plan in the form of a “living,” flexible document is requested for the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

June 2011: The technology fee was increased to \$13 per credit hour. Within the college it will be used to hire information technology (IT) staff to support computer labs, educational computer resources, etc. There will be a separate technology fee committee for each college. A single call for tech fee requests will occur in Spring 2012 this year. In the future, requests for use of technology fee resources will be considered in spring and fall semesters.

August 2011: All faculty were reminded to go through the proper channels for accessibility compliance for students. A discussion ensued about the difficulties for instructors associated with compliance issues including “note takers” being hired for students with different speeds recording information, textbooks with “accessibility” options included, etc. A \$13 per credit hour STEM fee was also mentioned.

Faculty Senate and University Core Curriculum members discussed curriculum modifications arising from the revamp of the University Core Curriculum. Departments are encouraged to decide on proposed general education courses as soon as possible, with a proposal to the Faculty Senate by October 15th. University no longer has “core courses” now, but they will be “repopulated” by departmental proposals. Each department is allowed four 1000-2000 level courses. Natural Sciences and Mathematics may want to review these courses as a college, as courses will be assessed in how they affect general education component of the curriculum, not the full curriculum. General education courses are required to have no “course” prerequisites, however, specific courses can be placed out of via tests, potentially transfer credit, etc. Some specifics to note:

1. Overall, the nature of these courses and how they address the competency of the students in a general way should be considered as this was seen as lacking during

- the previous accreditation review (10 years ago), and should be addressed in some way during the next accreditation review (next semester).
2. There have been changes in how the state provides reimbursement to a state university. Reimbursement will be provided based on the graduation of students. Reimbursement rates for general education courses have been reduced, while required programmatic courses receive higher rates. Departments need to put careful thought in their choices of general education courses and “course of study.”

Mike Cushing provided an update about the renovations to the Ritter Planetarium. Although ~20k people were visiting per year, attendance has decreased in recent years as the technology has not been improved significantly in recent decades. The exterior has been repainted, the interior remodeled, and a new digital projector has been installed to provide a more state-of-the-art media experience providing IMAX-like images of stars, galaxies, etc. Future goals will include converting existing analog programs to the new digital format, development of new programs based on astronomy research at UT and reaching out to other departments (not just astronomy) to potentially develop their own programs to utilize the technology. It will reopen in October, initially with VIP, public, media, and outreach (to schools, scout groups, etc.) events. The first show will be “Black Holes: The Other Side of Infinity.”

The requirements for the BA and BS degrees in the college were discussed, details of the plans are provided elsewhere. Concern was raised about how students could use (or potentially abuse) courses to satisfy multiple requirements. In general it was suggested that the number of courses at each level as a college requirement should remain the same. A key point arising from this conversation is whether the policies of the old Arts and Sciences should be adopted, except when superceded by those set forth in the new requirements. Open questions involved caps on courses within the majors and any upper limit on transfer credits to be set by the specific degree programs.

The curriculum committee was charged with combining the new BS and BA requirements with the old Arts and Sciences guidelines and course catalogue.

A vote was taken to implement the new college core curriculum with a few minor friendly amendments. The results were:

12 for
1 opposed
1 abstain

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 PM.