The Faculty Senate was called to order by Professor Cecelia Brown, Chair.

PRESENT: Apanasov, Asojo, Atiquzzaman, D. Bemben, M. Bemben, Blank, Bradshaw, Brown, Buckley, Callard, Clark, Conlon, Croft, Eodice, Forman, Graham, Grasse, Greene, Hawthorne, Horn, Kent, Kershen, Knapp, Lifschitz, Livesey, McDonald, Miller, Milton, Morrissey, Moses, Muraleetharan, Rambo, Reeder, Riggs, Rogers, Russell, Sadler, Schmidt, Strauss, Tan, Trafalis, Vehik, Vitt, Weaver, Wyckoff

Provost's office representative: Mergler ISA
representatives: Cook

ABSENT: Basic, Bass, Brule, Franklin, Radhakrishnan, Striz

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STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT DAVID BOREN

President Boren distributed several charts to update the senators on where we stand (see http://www.ou.edu/admin/facsen/DLB%20Faculty%20Senate%20Sept%202008.pdf). We were slightly crowded last year when we had almost 3900 freshmen. Our goal has been to stay under 4000 and to increase the quality. This year 3803 freshmen enrolled. We had 1400 more applicants for the freshman class than last year, and we have the highest academically-ranked class that we have ever had. Last year’s average ACT for first-time students was 25.8 or slightly below that, and 400 had a 4.0 in high school. This year’s average ACT of first-time students is 25.99, which breaks all records, and 470 had a 4.0 in high school. National merit students rose slightly, to 176. The president is really pleased about the freshman class. It continues the increases in our standards of excellence.

One worry is we received zero dollars, in essence, from the state for the Norman campus. We were facing in excess of $22 million in new expenditures. Part of the fixed costs could not be controlled because we have been trying to grow the faculty to improve our faculty-student ratio, and offers were already out. Again last year, the percentage of our budget funded by the state declined, so we had to resort to an increase in tuition and fees of about 9.9 percent. President Boren had planned on a minimum four percent salary program, but we were held to two percent. He was concerned about losing our ranking in the Big 12 in total faculty compensation, but we were able to retain our number two place, factoring in the cost of living. (The chart is a composite of all three faculty ranks.) The University of Texas is still our challenger. As a precaution, we put into place a freeze on hiring faculty and staff to control more effectively the rate at which we hire. In addition, the reallocations implemented this year have been
spent on one-time expenditures. We are making careful judgments about our resources. We want to keep as many commitments as we can, and we will still allow hiring in critical areas. The intent is to protect ourselves against any large tuition increases and have enough resources for a salary program next year. We do not want to quit dreaming about what we want; we must continue to build excellence.

Faculty growth in the past few years has been substantial. Total enrollment has held fairly steady over the last four years. Therefore, we are making enormous progress in our faculty-student ratio, which was 22 in 2005 and is now down to 17.7. Our graduation rate has increased dramatically, almost five percent. In 1994, the six-year graduation rate was 40.5 percent, for 2006 it was 58.8 percent, and for 2007 it was 63 percent. It is the largest one-year jump that the university has ever had. Our first year retention is about 86 percent. A lot of people are involved in the effort to improve our graduation rate. Average ACT scores of first-time students have gone from 22.1 in fall 1987 to 25.9 in fall 2008. Our admissions standards have changed twice over the last ten years. As our standards have gone up, the number and quality of applications, particularly from good students, have gone up. If applicants do not meet the requirements, generally they do not apply, and that hurts us some in the rankings because we accept a large percentage of applicants.

We are now at 539 endowed chairs and professorships, including presidential professorships. In May the legislature approved a $100 million bond issue to be applied toward the backlog of endowed positions. Oklahoma colleges and universities still have a backlog of approximately $250-300 million in endowed positions that have not been matched by the state. Another part of the action taken by the legislature was a provision that the endowments that were fully funded by the donor by June 30 would be matched dollar-for-dollar; after that the state would only contribute $5-6 million a year total. President Boren’s hope is the legislature will reconsider once we get caught up. The program has been an important factor for quality education in the state and a bargain for taxpayers. We had about six weeks to encourage donors to complete their existing commitments by the
deadline. The vast majority who had planned to pay the donation out over a few years sent all the money in. We had $276 million come in as gifts this year, many for endowed positions. In the 1970s and 1980s we were averaging about $10 million a year in private gifts. For quite some time we have been averaging above $100 million. The ACT scores of students, faculty endowments and growth in faculty begin to tell the story of why we have improved in excellence. A decade ago, we picked Kansas as our goal in terms of total library volumes. We now are second in the Big 12, behind Texas, but Texas has three times as many students as we have.

The President turned to initiatives in process. A committee is looking at health care and recommended a change that should result in better health insurance, a slower escalation in costs, and better service. Also, a committee is looking at the policy for retiree health insurance. Nothing will happen to anyone who is eligible to retire or is within five years of retiring. The committee’s recommendation will be brought to the Faculty Senate.

To improve the educational experience, the president wants to increase the percentage of students who have overseas study experience. We are up against parents who do not want their children to go overseas because of safety concerns. Many families are more comfortable if faculty members are heavily involved in the programs. We are looking at possible university partners in places where students can have a good experience and be as safe as possible. Other problems involve colleges where restrictions are so tight that students cannot meet courses requirements if they study overseas. The president said he welcomes any thoughts on how to encourage and make it possible for students to have an overseas study experience. We also are trying to increase the interaction between international students and our own students on campus. The Cousins program has been relatively successful, but we need to have more involvement with international students in housing. For example, the Greek system could make international students honorary members.

The College of Architecture is going through an interesting time. A
new dean was hired this summer. While Architecture’s building is being renovated, classes have been moved temporarily to the former Hobby Lobby building. The college is in the process of trying to plan our role in the state quality communities, which could include holding conferences on city planning.

President Boren said so far, the year could not have gone better in terms of graduation rates, faculty-student ratio, the quality of the freshman class, and endowed chairs and professorships.

Prof. Hawthorne said the information in the charts was really interesting. He asked if the charts would be available online. President Boren said the charts would be available by the next day because he thinks it is good to share with each other and with people outside of the university. We have been trying to improve our web site and put more information about the university out there. He noted that we are among the ten most wired campuses in the country.

Prof. Milton said it was surprising that Texas A&M was so far down on the list with regard to money coming into their institution. President Boren said their endowment includes state lands and state government, not just endowment. One reason may be that they have had a lot of leadership changes at the presidential and dean levels. He pointed out that over a fourth of the U.S. News ranking is reputation. Usually the reputation factor is 5-10 years behind, which hurts schools like us. Texas A&M University and the University of Texas each have about 60,000 students. Our strongest competition the last seven years has been the University of Texas.

Prof. Forman asked whether President Boren had a longer view of where our funding will come from. President Boren replied that funding from the state is down to 18 percent; the medical school is at 8 percent. That means we are relying on private donations, earnings by the faculty in research, and tuition/fees far more than what is coming from the state. The good news is our scholarship drive is now approaching $140 million. Scholarship availability in dollars rose slightly more than tuition and fee increases. Some of our upper mid
size and larger gifts are starting to come from more recent graduates. With the financial pressures at the federal level, it is likely that the federal government will keep pushing medical care and costs onto the states. There is no way for us to maintain excellence if we do not get more funding from the state or if tuition is ever frozen. When President Boren was governor, funding for higher education was above 40 percent. He commented that he is now the senior serving president in the Big 12, and Provost Mergler probably is the longest serving provost in the Big 12. There is enormous turnover at some of the institutions, which makes it difficult to set long-term goals. Our goals are to work hard on private giving and expand our research, but not compromise our teaching mission. Mentorship to students is more important than ever, and our faculty do that well.

Prof. Vitt asked about the president’s point concerning regional development. He remarked that the university had a real opportunity to involve environmental-related departments in regional planning such that the growth in cities is done in an environmentally sound manner. President Boren said we are creating within the College of Architecture an interdisciplinary project, which will address challenges such as preserving green space. The university has an obligation to set an example. Prof. Vitt pointed out that Arizona State University received funding a number of years ago to do regional planning with the ecosystem in mind. We should not miss out on such an opportunity; otherwise we could look like north Dallas in a short amount of time. President Boren responded that the built environment affects the way we behave and feel. We need to be a role model for others. This year we will start to move out in a really strong way. Prof. Vitt noted that we had missed the boat in a number of ways. For instance, the Canadian River is a spectacular piece of ecosystem, and a giant car dealership was recently built nearby. President Boren noted that the Oklahoma River project in Oklahoma City had become an asset to the community. He said he welcomed faculty thoughts. We can have an impact on the whole state because so many places are going to grow. The area around Blanchard and Newcastle is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. We need to have green space and not pave over everything.
Prof. Muraleetharan suggested that maybe we should push for different metrics in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. President Boren agreed that *U.S. News* should look at metrics such as the increase in graduation rate, improvement in student-faculty ratio, academic excellence of the freshman class, and number of endowed faculty positions instead of polling university presidents and provosts. The Princeton Review and others have done right by us. Rankings are frustrating, though, because people can manipulate the standings.

Prof. Livesey pointed out that the Sooner Heritage Scholarship is one of the notable successes. He asked if there were programs on the horizon that would do the same for graduate scholarships or fellowships. President Boren said we had expanded fellowships somewhat, but we need to do more. Graduate fellowships, undergraduate scholarship and the study abroad scholarships are all part of our campaign for scholarships. Prof. Livesey said it goes to the question of rankings of the university as a whole. President Boren agreed and said we need to continue to bring top-quality graduate students here. However, donors generally designate where they want to donate money. We do not have a lot of discretionary money.

President Boren closed by saying he appreciates the faculty. The improvements to the University represent a tremendous amount of talent and commitment. The regents recently extended his contract five years. He encouraged the senators to pass on suggestions to the Senate Executive Committee. His relationship with the Executive Committee is a tremendous help to him because he can share problems he is facing with the university and get suggestions. He learned from former President Cross that it is important to get unfiltered advice from the faculty.

**APPROVAL OF JOURNAL**

The Faculty Senate Journal for the regular session of May 5, 2008 was approved.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

A list of the Faculty Senate members is attached. Prof. Brown introduced the Executive Committee members and new Senate members.

The regular meetings of the Faculty Senate for 2008-09 will be held at 3:30 p.m. on the following Mondays in Jacobson Faculty Hall 102: September 8, October 13, November 10, December 8, February 9, March 9, April 13, and May 11.

The Senate Executive Committee elected Prof. Jon Forman (Law) as parliamentarian of the Faculty Senate and Regular Faculty.

The compilation of the 2007-08 annual reports of University councils was e-mailed July 10 to the Faculty Senate members and to chairs, directors and deans to make available to the general faculty. The reports are available online at http://www.ou.edu/admin/facsen/cnclrep08.htm.

The 2008-09 list of faculty appointments to committees is available on the Faculty Senate web site at http://www.ou.edu/admin/facsen/commem08.htm.

The summary record of the disposition by the administration of Faculty Senate actions for September 2007 to August 2008 is attached.

The Chronicle of Higher Education, Academe and the Norman campus budget are available through the Senate office.

The OU Assessment Report, Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Outcomes Assessment Reports, Student Satisfaction Report and the Student Satisfaction Comment Report for 2006-07 are available in the Senate office.

FINAL EXAM PREPARATION PERIOD

Mr. Kurt Davidson, Chair of the Undergraduate Student Congress of
the University of Oklahoma Student Association, introduced Vice Chair John Jennings and Academic Affairs Chair Frank Wood. He announced the activities that were planned to register students to vote. The project is titled “OU votes: 2008 in 2008.” Any questions or concerns may be emailed to Mr. Davidson at congress@ou.edu.

Mr. Davidson reported that last April, the entire student body voted on proposed revisions in pre-finals week (http://www.ou.edu/admin/facsen/uosaprefin.htm). Students are particularly concerned about the special deviation clause within the current policy (section 4.10 of the Faculty Handbook, http://www.ou.edu/provost/pronew/content/fhbmenu.html). The student proposal would reduce the weight of projects from 10 percent to 5 percent and strike the special deviation clause. The student leaders understand that professors need wiggle room to make their classes successful, so they are considering compromise proposals. With the ever increasing number of night classes that have finals in pre-finals week, the fear is there will be more and more special deviations. The students realize they will not be able to strike the entire clause.

Prof. Milton said his problem with the proposal was faculty could not teach anything in the last week. What the students are asking for is a reading week in which faculty could not cover any new material. Mr. Davidson explained that the current policy states that nothing can be due on the last two days of pre-finals week, interpreted to be Thursday and Friday. They realize they cannot get rid of an entire week of teaching, but they do not want major assignments due while students are taking two or three finals. Prof. Strauss asked, “Are students really asking that if I teach them something on Monday and Wednesday, they would rather have it directly on the final without ever turning in homework and knowing whether they have learned it or not?” Mr. Davidson replied that students have conveyed that the final two days should be for review. He pointed out that there are about four separate policies within the document and that it is worded poorly. Prof. Brown said that was because it had been added to and added to. Mr. Wood commented that students want to understand the material. However, graded work could be due earlier. One way to help students understand
the material would be to give them the questions and then post the answers a couple of days later. Then students do not have to worry about turning in daily assignments, but they can study everything before the final. Mr. Davidson said the students would like to have the requirements clearly stated in the syllabus at the beginning of the school year and to have slightly more restrictions on the special deviations. They want the information before the end of the drop period, and they do not want syllabi changed mid term.

Prof. Kent noted that according to the data from the president, graduation rates have gone up dramatically. Apparently, there are no data that show the current policy prevents students from succeeding. There seems to be no evidence that there is a problem. Mr. Davidson answered that 93 percent of students who voted said there was a problem. Prof. Vitt agreed that there did not seem to be any evidence that the policy is affecting students. What he sees is students voting to make a program easier. The proposal seems yet another means of reducing the amount and quality of information given in a course. Courses are designed by professors to best represent the information in the course. It does not make any sense to have the students design how professors teach those courses. A vote is not data. Mr. Davidson said the students want the assignments that are due to be stated in the initial syllabus so they will know before the drop period. He called the syllabus a “binding contract.”

Prof. Rambo pointed out that if the problem was the overlap with non-traditional and evening classes that have finals during the last week of class, perhaps those finals could be moved to finals week. Provost Mergler replied that there was a complication in terms of classroom availability during finals week. She noted that the proposal was similar to the OSU policy. Most campuses in the Big 12 have a slightly greater generosity than OU. Mr. Davidson reiterated that students are not trying to tell faculty how to teach; they just want everything straightforward from the first week of classes and not have changes made mid term.

Prof. Apanasov echoed the previous opinions that there were no data
supporting the change. He said he thought students would be against the proposal if they knew they had one week less to finish projects. Mr. Davidson said students had a potential compromise. They want to clarify what the last two days of pre-finals week actually means. In addition, instead of deleting section C, they are willing to revise the language to read, “Special case deviations from the policy must be clearly stated in the initial course syllabus and approved by the chair of the department through which the course is offered.” He said that many professors change their syllabus midstream, even though the first one is a binding contract. Faculty would not have to go any further than the department chair to get approval for these deviations. It just needs to be clear from day one that students are going to have a paper worth 30 percent, for example, due in the last week before finals in case they have three finals during that week.

Prof. Muraleetharan said the most important issue for him is the learning process. He said he wanted to see some data; the vote was not enough. He said he lists an assignment at the beginning in the initial syllabus and has it due before pre-finals week, but students want to delay as much as possible and submit it during pre-finals week. He said Mr. Davidson should bring some testimonials from students. Prof. Bradshaw asked whether the issue was when there was a deviation from the initial syllabus and the assignment was not scheduled 30 days in advance. If there is the option of turning it in early, is that all right? Prof. Strauss answered that no assignments can be due on Thursday or Friday even if they are in the initial syllabus. Prof. Bradshaw asked if the policy applied to all students and whether we had classes that met only on Thursday. Prof. Brown replied that the language needs to be changed to specify that the last two days are Thursday and Friday, not Saturday and Sunday, and there are Thursday-only classes.

Prof. Vitt said the students needed data to show that faculty members are changing their syllabus midstream. Prof. Milton said the students should come back with their new proposal so the Senate would have what they are proposing in front of them. Prof. Brown said the students had submitted a compromise proposal to the Executive Committee, but
it did not fly. Prof. Strauss said he actually was in favor of not changing syllabi, and that is what we need to focus on. If students know throughout the semester that something worth 30 percent of their grade is due, then it is up to the students to get it done. What he disagrees with is the restriction on Thursday and Friday. Mr. Davidson reminded the group that the Thursday and Friday restriction has been in the policy. The students’ primary push has been on not changing the ground rules. Prof. Brown said the proposal was just for discussion at this meeting; no vote would be taken. The students will come back next time with possible revisions.

**SENATE CHAIR'S REPORT, ISSUES FOR 2007-08 by Prof. Cecelia Brown**

Due to time constraints, Prof. Brown postponed her chair’s report. She advised the senators to send any items of concern to her or to the Senate office, and she will discuss them with the Executive Committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next regular session of the Faculty Senate will be held at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, October 13, 2008, in Jacobson Faculty Hall 102.

____________________________________ Sonya Fallgatter,
Administrative Coordinator

____________________________________ Paula Conlon, Faculty Secretary