

Baylor University
School of Engineering and Computer Science
Board of Advocates
Spring Meeting – April 25, 2008
Baylor University

Board members attending: Mark Cannata, Joe Cestari, Larry Johnson, Fred Logan, Lloyd Lund, Rick Maule, Bill Mearse, Jim McDonough, Craig Nickell, Clell Oravetz, Bill Ratfield, Daryl Sims, Steve Smith, Harold Spangler, Dean Swisher, Trent Voigt, and Matt Watson

Board members absent: Ken Ross, Shawn Sedate

Others attending: Dean Ben Kelley, Don Gaitros, Bill Jordan, Rob Kennedy, Kwang Lee, Leigh Ann Marshall, Cheryl Tucker, and various faculty, staff, and students from the School of Engineering and Computer Science

Welcome

Following a continental breakfast, Bill Mearse convened the meeting. He introduced Diana Ramey, Assistant VP for Enrollment Management. She gave an overview of Baylor's recent admissions success and talked about the challenges facing the Baylor recruiting team. She provided statistics reflecting retention and graduation rates. She shared the key messages that the recruiting team conveys to prospective students and reviewed the functions of the University's campus visits, admission services, and Paul L. Foster Success Center. The Board discussed graduation rates and agreed that a student who participated in extracurricular activities (especially with leadership roles) and held a job while going to college made a better-rounded graduate.

Dean's Report

Following Ms. Ramey's comments, Dean Kelley brought the Dean's Report. He outlined the current Strategic Initiative Proposals, early discussions about facilities expansion, ECS application data, retiring faculty and current faculty searches, and the status of faculty members' tenure decisions.

Admissions/Enrollment Management/ECS LLC Report

Following the Dean's Report, Mr. Adam Ecklund, and Mr. Aaron Dabney gave a presentation about current status of the Engineering & Computer Science Living-Learning Center (LLC) and efforts to shape the incoming class of engineering and computer science students. Mr. Ecklund reviewed the purpose of the ECS LLC and provided statistics about the current residents. He talked about student life within the LLC and the support of the faculty in residence, the LLC Board of Directors. Finally, he outlined future goals and plans of the ECS LLC.

In response, the Board heard from Board member Larry Johnson, who agreed that the LLC experience was beneficial. Mr. Johnson's son, Grant, was a charter resident of the LLC and had a very good experience there.

Mr. Dabney gave an overview of ECS student applications, acceptances, and deposits. He reviewed enrollment trends within ECS departments and outlined some recruitment initiatives. He detailed Baylor Premier, which are recruitment events held three times per year, and how ECS participates in Premier. He also defined the Renaissance Scholar Program, a summer experience for rising high school seniors. Finally, he unveiled plans for the ECS Vanguard Program, for students who enter with lower test scores and class rank.

The Board discussed the high rate of University deposits among incoming ECS students. Mr. Dabney confirmed Mr. Ecklund's active participation in recruitment, counting his daily campus visit appointment time and other "direct touches" Mr. Ecklund makes as critical to the deposit success. Mr. Cestari agreed that LLC scholarships are an important program-based scholarship. Finally, Dean Kelley agreed that there are still opportunities to do more recruiting and enrollment management.

Graduate Recruitment and Admissions Report

Dr. David Sturgill, Director of the Computer Science Graduate Program, gave the Board of Advocates an overview of computer science graduate student recruitment and enrollment. Additionally, he described the computer science graduate program's fall 2008 class and current application trends. In response, Board members suggested that recruitment extend to other departments at Baylor and include a diverse membership of minorities and females. To the latter, Dr. Sturgill responded that student-to-student connection helps recruit similar students, and a diverse class is a priority. Mr. Mearse asked how many graduate students go into a Ph.D. program, and Dr. Sturgill answered most go directly to industry rather than a doctoral program. Mr. Voigt wondered about the large number of international students. Dr. Sturgill responded that international students tend to remain in the United States following completion of their bachelors degrees, and international students comprise a strong group among the applicant pool. In conclusion, he said that most international students remain in the United States following completion of their masters degrees.

Following Dr. Sturgill's presentation, Dr. Mike Thompson, Director of the Engineering Graduate Program, provided a brief history of the program and descriptions of its degree requirements, descriptions of joint programs, and scholarship funding. He shared charts describing applicant statistics and current student enrollment. Finally, he outlined ongoing issues within the engineering program, including PhD proposals, curriculum coordination, graduate teaching assistants, potential staffing in the biomedical engineering program, and recruiting. In response to Dr. Thompson's presentation, Mr. Swisher asked how long the engineering masters degree was designed to take a student to complete. Dr. Thompson answered, "two years."

Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Grantsmanship Reports

Dr. Ken Van Treuren, Associate Dean for Faculty Research and Development, addressed the Board. He gave an overview of proposals and funded research, conferences attended and journal papers presented, and research concerns of the School of Engineering & Computer Science. Those concerns include: attempting to understand new tenure expectations; refining tenure and promotion documents; expectations in line with University; educating the administration about engineering; requests for tenure reconsideration letters ; more emphasis on Master's Program/PhD (traditional research); hiring strategically (right discipline/overlap); addressing the teaching requirements; increasing student enrollment although faculty numbers are not increasing (and may decrease); research faculty course overloads (2-2 ECS 1-1 Science); and resources, including space and funding (travel).

Student Panel

Following Dr. Van Treuren's presentation, a student panel of five students met with the Board. Mr. Greg McNew, a junior transfer student, described his involvement in the competitive learning class and with the NSF "Students for Academic Success" scholarship program for transfer students, administered by Dr. Eisenbarth and Dr. Skurla. He talked briefly about his experiences with an internship at CBORD and as an athletic tutor as a Baylor student. (He plans to participate in an internship with USAA during the summer 2008.) Mr. McNew's future plans may include graduate school.

Mr. Steven Mart, a junior mechanical engineering major, participated in last summer's I5 program abroad. He is currently working on an honors thesis with Dr. Van Treuren relating to research about aircraft icing. He spoke briefly about giving presentations at an ASME conference, and he is considering graduate school upon graduation.

Ms. Yasaman Shirazi-Fard, a senior mechanical engineering student, was a few days away from graduating from Baylor. She told of her experiences since her freshman year and involvement in Curves, International research projects through the completion of her honors thesis that focused on two of her interests: karate and biomechanics. Ms. Shirazi-Fard was also involved in the ECS Living Learning Center (ECS LLC) and the student chapter of ASME. She plans to pursue a doctorate degree at A&M.

Ms. Brandy Brewster, a computer science graduate student, also earned her bachelors degree in computer science at Baylor. She shared her early college experience as a track athlete and the influential conversation she had with Prof. Cindy Fry who challenged her to examine her sports and academic goals.

Mr. Gilbert Narvaez, a mechanical engineering senior, was also set to graduate at the end of the current spring semester; however, he recently decided to pursue an engineering graduate degree and, therefore, would not participate in the commencement ceremony. He related his involvement with the ECS LLC since its initial semester and with ASME. He underscored the importance of faculty involvement and engineering as a vocation.

In the brief remaining time, Mr. Swisher asked the panel to describe an obstacle or challenging time each student had faced. Mr. McNew related his experience as a transfer student and said

that “time management” was a challenge. Mr. Mart remembered when he had not declared a major and then working to catch up to his peers in mechanical engineering. Ms. Shirazi-Fard spoke of feeling out of place, having grown up in Iran and Connecticut. Ms. Brewster remembered living with non-ECS students who challenged her academic priorities before moving to the ECS LLC. Mr. Narvaez agreed that studying and time management were challenges for him.

Finally, Mr. Smith asked the panel to name a particular influence of Baylor and/or the School of Engineering & Computer Science. Mr. McNew cited faculty interaction. Mr. Mart said that class size and the Christian environment were important. Ms. Shirazi-Fard appreciated the small class size. Ms. Brewster was thankful for academic (and athletic) scholarships, and Mr. Narvaez said that Baylor provided him with “a holistic education.”

Analysis of Global/Business/Communications (GBC) Initiative

Following lunch, the Board heard from a multidisciplinary team of Baylor faculty. Drs. Walter Bradley (engineering), Anne Grinols (business), Richard Edwards (communication studies) and Glenn Blalock (English) told of their experiences with and assessments of the GBC course. Each faculty member summarized her/his experiences as very positive. They all agreed that the GBC course provided equivalent content to existing Engineering Economics, technical writing, and speech communications curriculum.

ECS Development Overview

Mr. Rob Kennedy, Director of Development, gave the Board a report on fundraising efforts. He was joined in this session by Mr. Toby Barnett, Senior Executive Director for Unit Development II, Mr. Mark Minor, Associate Vice President for Major Gifts, and Dr. Dennis Prescott, Vice President for University Development. Mr. Kennedy outlined development goals and reported on fundraising trends and recent success. Finally, he spoke about ECS facilities expansion and fundraising for current strategic initiatives. Following the presentation, the Board met with the University Development officers in a closed session.

Full Board Session

Mr. Mearse began the session by asking the Board members to comment on the day’s discussions. Mr. Swisher lauded the GBC initiative and encouraged ECS to publicize its success. Mr. Mearse added that non-ECS faculty “took a risk” to participate. Mr. Mearse suggested letting President Lilley and Dr. O’Brien to recognize the partnering faculty and commending the GBC as a valuable program. Mr. Mearse also spoke for the Board in appreciation for hearing about enrollment and development. He appreciated the interaction with the student panel.

Regarding the tenure issue, he asked how the Board should support ECS. Dean Kelley replied that there was no clear way to do that, although he did believe that the letter supporting the GBC was an excellent idea and a way to convey “great things going on in ECS.”

Mr. Swisher asked whether help from the Board in risk assessment relating to tenure was warranted. Dean Kelley responded that there would probably be some fallout from the ultimate tenure decisions, and he was prepared to accept the final decisions. Dean Kelley said it is important that the President and Provost have confidence in ECS. Mr. Mearse asked about broader implications of tenure decisions across the University. Dean Kelley responded that, while the President's job may be at risk, it may eventually be necessary to study how ECS could eventually be viewed in a positive light by the University administration. He said that discussions over the next few months would be critical in determining the future.

Mr. Mearse acknowledged the Board members who were renewing their terms of service on the Board. The Board also approved the fall meeting date: October 3, 2008.

Finally, Mr. Mearse spoke about the Board's earlier closed session. He asked (1) where ECS stands strategically and (2) how to get to "critical mass." He asked whether it was necessary to grow ECS at the expense of another University program and emphasized that the Board of Advocates wants to help. He concluded by saying there were no particular action items stemming from the closed session.