

Baylor University

Faculty Senate Newsletter

May, 2000

The **1999-00 Faculty Senate** officers and membership:

Chair: Robert Baird

(Arts and Sciences)

Chair-elect: Jay Losey

(Arts and Sciences)

Secretary: Charles Weaver

(Arts and Sciences)

Publicity: Buddy Gilchrest

(Education)

Arts and Sciences:

Linda Adams

Robert "Bob" Baird

Rosalie Beck

Anne-Marie Bowery

William Jensen

Phillip Johnson

David Longfellow

Jay Losey

Dan McGee

Richard Riley

Sara Stone

Joan Supplee

Charles Weaver

Ray Wilson

Joe Yelderman

David Young

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Gary Carini

Joe Cox

Charles Davis

Mark Dunn

Karen Johnson

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Education:

Fred Curtis

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Deborah Johnston

**Engineering and
Computer Science:**

Don Farris

Law:

Marianne Auld

Libraries:

William Hair

Music:

Jane Abbott-Kirk

Christopher Buddo

Nursing:

Sandra Genrich

Truett Seminary:

David Garland

Comments from Robert Baird, Senate Chair:

The Michael Polanyi Center

As chair of the Baylor University Faculty Senate, I feel obligated to make three additional comments about the controversy surrounding the creation of the Michael Polanyi Center at Baylor.

First, the English Philosopher John Stuart Mill captured both my mind and heart as a young college student. He did so with his arguments in defense of free thought and discussion. Throughout my academic life, Mill's principles have been my guide. I am particularly disturbed, therefore, that anyone would interpret the recent Faculty Senate Resolution on the Polanyi Center as censorship of intellectual discussion. I know of no one on the Senate or anyone else on the faculty who would oppose Dr. Bill Dembski's presenting and defending his Intelligent Design Theory at a forum at Baylor. Many on the faculty, in the name of free thought and discussion, would like to see more controversial issues addressed in public debates on our campus. The issue in this case, however, is the creation of a center with a particular agenda without consulting those directly affected by that agenda.

Second, I have been puzzled by President Sloan's conviction that faculty were consulted about the creation of the Polanyi Center. In the spring of 1999, Dr. Dembski, now director of the Polanyi Center, made a presentation at Baylor under the auspices of Mike Beaty's Institute for Faith and Learning. Perhaps President Sloan got the impression that because Dembski was on campus, consultation was taking place. I was out of town at the time, but three colleagues from my department, Professors Carl Vaught, Stuart Rosenbaum, and Anne Bowery attended Dembski's presentation. They have assured me that the presentation was not made in the context of the possibility of creating a center. Nevertheless, I have been so concerned that fairness prevail that this morning I reread every email between Mike Beaty and me going back to September of 1999. I did discover an email between us in which Bill Dembski's work was discussed. In that email the idea of a center's being created is mentioned. I suggested to Mike that if such a center were going to be created, the members of the biology department should be consulted and that the philosophy department should discuss the matter. Neither of those discussions took place. Subsequently, I was

surprised to discover that, in fact, a center had been created, named the Polanyi Center. When this spring I began to receive so many expressions of concern from colleagues in the sciences, I sent an email on April 9th to every member of each science department at Baylor asking if anyone had been consulted about the Center. I received many responses to that email--not one in the affirmative. Even this morning, I personally checked again with the chair of biology to be sure that he was not consulted. He assured me that he had not been. I do, however, want to note for the record that the notion of creating a "center" was at one point mentioned to me by my colleague Beaty in an email in September of 1999.

Third, although President Sloan and I have significantly different perspectives on how to proceed at this point, he is the president, and I respect the fact that in this situation he is the decision-maker. Now that he has decided to proceed with an evaluation of the Polanyi Center by a committee comprised largely of individuals from outside the university, I hope that the process works well. My philosophy colleague, William Cooper, has agreed to chair the evaluation committee, and I can think of no one who would fulfill that responsibility more judiciously than Bill. I wish him well. I wish President Sloan well. Most of all, I wish Baylor well.

A Final Word

In the first paragraph of this piece, I spoke of an obligation I felt. Let me speak of another. The cooperation between the Senate and the administration this year has been so productive that I also feel obligated to remind us of that and to express hope that we can constructively build on what has been achieved. Two weeks ago, for example, the Senate received notification that its recommended changes in the letter faculty receive after completing the sixth-year pre-tenure review was approved. The previous letter contained a line that appeared to sanction the granting of "tenure with qualification." That issue was a matter of great concern to the faculty last spring. The administration has responded to that concern by accepting the Senate proposal.

This year President Sloan has met for conversation with small groups of senators. As a direct result of those conversations, he addressed faculty concerns over the Scholarly Expectations Document in a way that many found encouraging because it reaffirmed Baylor's commitment to teaching as a matter of high priority. Along the same lines, a promotion document was modified in conversation between the Senate and the administration that resulted in encouraging flexible promotion criteria that reflect the different gifts that faculty members have and the different departmental situations in which they carry out their responsibilities.

The Senate and the administration also reached agreement on a new grievance policy and new dismissal procedures.

I close with this word because while I feel obligated to express legitimate faculty discontent over the Polanyi Center, I also feel obligated to tell the whole story of this year's faculty/administration relationship, and much of that story has been positive. As Jay Losey assumes the role of chair, I hope for him and the Senate a constructive relationship with the administration that serves Baylor well in the year to come.

Robert Baird, Chair

Faculty Senate

April 25, 2000

Faculty Senate Meeting Dates

All meetings scheduled for Cashion 303 at 3:30 p.m.

May 9, 2000

Faculty Senate Website

http://www3.baylor.edu/~Fac_Senate/senatehome.html

The Senate website has minutes, meeting dates, membership, and other important information. Please send suggestions to: buddy_gilchrest@Baylor.edu.

The Senate wishes to thank:

Randy Francis for assistance with the Faculty Senate web page and

Tresa Gilchrest for assistance with the Faculty Senate Newsletter.