

## **FORMER STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD**

### **Department of Political Science**

Minutes of July 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001 Retreat

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mark Spencer at 9:05AM in Room 205 of the Memorial Student Center. Present were Spencer, Mike Balog (Staff liaison to Career Committee), Patricia Hurley (Professor and Interim Head of the Department of Political Science), Mark Frugoni (Chair of Fundraising Committee), Erin Blaney (student representative), Shawn Carlson (Development Relations Specialist), Evelyn Smith (Chair-Elect), Charles A. Johnson (Dean and Professor of Political Science), Jack O'Brien (Chair of Career Committee), and Merna Jacobsen (Facilitator). Absent were Professor Gary Halter (Faculty liaison to Board), Molly Whisenant (Past Chair), and Tomasz Nowak (President of the Political Science Society). Erin Blaney graciously sat in for Tomasz Nowak.

Mark Spencer asked each person present to identify themselves and their role on the Board. Dean Johnson took the opportunity to tell us about his new role in the College and introduce Patricia Hurley as the Interim Head of the Department. Committee reports followed. Jack O'Brien stated that two Career Days are being planned this fall—on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>—so that both MW and TTh classes can be visited. Once volunteer speakers have been identified, Jack asked that Mike Balog send out reminders to those people. Both Jack and Mark Frugoni said that they have received telephone calls and e-mails from students after their participation in previous Career Days. There was some discussion as to how to make it easier for current students to contact the Career Day speakers. Several people suggested that the event be announced on the Department's website. Evelyn Smith stated that the mixer a few years ago was well received and should be done again.

Mark Frugoni reported that the Founding Memberships have carried over into Sustaining Memberships and that Active Memberships have been added, providing the base support for FSAB. Mark would like to branch-out and find other ways of obtaining donations from older graduates. Dean Johnson stated that over half of Political Science's graduates have graduated since 1990 and are not in a position to give. He suggested that other types of memberships be explored, perhaps through a membership committee, e.g., honorary memberships for faculty and parents.

Evelyn Smith reiterated the mission of FSAB and said that a year ago during a conference call of the executive committee the idea of a retreat came up. She said it was now time to reassess the goals of the Board and then turned the meeting over to the facilitator, Merna Jacobsen, from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

In her opening remarks, Merna said that as a facilitator she provides the framework for the meeting but it is up to the Board to do the work of determining their goals. She explained that the role of boards has evolved over the years; a summary of her Power Point presentation is below.

### Objectives of the ideal board member

- ❑ Know why the organization exists, and annually review why it should. Give money and help get it, or both. Face budgets with courage, endowments with doubt, deficits with dismay, and recover quickly from the surplus. Combine a New England sense of obligation with and Irish sense of humor.

### The Traditional Board of Directors

- ❑ Determine the mission and objectives of the organization.
- ❑ Establish short-term objectives and long-range goals.
- ❑ Give and get financial support.
- ❑ Represent the organization to the community.
- ❑ Select & evaluate the chief executive officer.
- ❑ Adopt & monitor operating & fiscal goals & reporting procedures.
- ❑ Assess the performance of the board.

### The Advisory Board (Committee)

- ❑ A Group of volunteers that meets regularly on a long-term basis to provide advice and/or support to an institution or one of its sub units.
- ❑ "Window of exchange with members of a broader society"
- ❑ Provides external input into internal processes
- ❑ Helping in the 'outside' world

### Typical Roles & Functions of the Advisory Board

- ❑ Strengthening programs
- ❑ Improving management
- ❑ Reviewing & evaluating mission, programs, and services
- ❑ Recruiting personnel
- ❑ Raising funds
- ❑ Promoting public relations
- ❑ Improving relations with other organizations

### What makes an Advisory Board Effective?

- ❑ Institutional representatives genuinely desire the board's input
- ❑ The board is comprised of knowledgeable, committed individuals whose interest in volunteering their own time is sustained by appropriate reward and recognition
- ❑ The board's group process and procedures for governance allow for regular meetings, a sense of engagement and ownership, access to the information needed to provide appropriate advice.
- ❑ The expectations about the roles of the board are clear, consistent, and well communicated

### Governing vs. Advisory

- ❑ The function of governing boards is to control and assist. They have the ultimate decision-making authority, responsibility & liability.

- The function of the advisory board is to provide assistance, to advise, and to make recommendations. They have no power to make policy decisions nor are they legally liable.

Merna spoke briefly about the importance of “presence,” i.e., being sought out by others as opposed to just being visible—and apparently FSAB has it. She also stressed the 20/80 concept that says 20% of goals will address 80% of concerns. In the discussion that followed, Mark Frugoni said that he thought our Board was a combination of a governing board and an advisory board. Evelyn Smith thought FSAB had only scratched the surface of what an advisory board should be doing. Mark Frugoni suggested that FSAB’s mission statement could be conflicting, i.e., both students AND Department believe that FSAB’s mission is to help each of them. Merna pointed out the conflict between politics and education, that is, the Department’s need to acquire resources to help students. Evelyn said she would like to explore the possibilities of a sub-committee to help with curriculum development. Merna suggested the use of “visiting” committees who are composed of practitioners who come to invigorate departments with information about real world practices. Pat Hurley commented on the disparity between training students in political science and making them attractive to future employers. Merna noted that the business community is influencing curriculum development more and more to satisfy their own needs. Pat Hurley asked if students are clients—saying that economists think they’re products!

Following the discussion, Merna’s first task for us was a “cybernetic session” designed to ferret out any and all goals of the Board; the goals were prioritized so that we could see what the top three or four goals were. Next she asked us to take those goals and identify “action steps,” a timeline, and the person responsible for making each step happen. Lastly, she asked us to reassess the purpose of the Board, using what we had learned during the course of the day, to begin revising the mission statement.

For the cybernetic session, Merna selected three thought-provoking questions for brainstorming purposes. Each question was written on a sheet of paper from the flip chart. The committee was then divided into three groups and each group rotated so that everyone had an opportunity to add their thoughts to the three questions. The three questions are stated below with the list of responses from the committee.

*(1) What are the values and beliefs that guide our work?*

Commitment: department, students, TAMU

Betterment: prepare students; expand opportunities

Realism: academic vs. real world

Leadership: governorship

Responsibility to inform: faculty and staff, students, former students

Relationships (between department and practitioners): both have and bring value; need to utilize both

Pride: sense of value of political science degree; belief that FSAB is truly instrumental in department’s success

Education: belief in education and in value of degree; graduates alert undergrads to value of what they learned in Political Science, e.g. “that paper that seemed silly at the time really did teach you something.”

FSAB matters: it makes things happen in student success; it is *worth* being a member of FSAB.

(2) *Where are we in terms of our relationships with our constituency groups? Where should we be and where do we need to go? (Look at trends, information, other groups)*

## GROUPS

Current constituency groups:

Current students

Former students (esp. donors)

Public (future students)

Parents

Faculty

Interested parties (TAMU Career Center, College of Liberal Arts liaison)

Need to increase visibility within current students

Need to assess current relationships with faculty and former students (survey)

Need to conduct needs assessment of current groups

Take survey results and establish goals and expertise

Develop more faculty input

Get students to consider careers broadly, i.e., more than law school.

## INFORMATION

Hiring organizations and what they want:

Identify skills students need such as writing, critical thinking, multi-tasking

Identify “process” that would help students in their careers

What types of faculty speakers does FSAB want? What does group want out of faculty speaker?

Academic talks?

Practical talks?

Entertaining talks?

What are other ways to get information besides through surveys?

Need to assist students with forming vision of themselves

Need to consider communication needs as way of making groups more visible, i.e., more meetings? More mail-outs? More newsletters? Use of website? Other kinds of communication?

Need newsletter for current students—suggest twice a year.

## TRENDS

What are other boards on campus doing?

Develop relationships with other boards but maintain individual identity.

*(3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of FSAB?*

#### STRENGTHS

Commitment

Time

Knowledge

Good people

Good goal

Scholarship money

Career placements

Ideas

“Presence;” model organization

Diversity of People

Work

Age

Youth of organization

Resources available

Recognition by college

#### WEAKNESSES

Need more people to be involved, especially those with graduate degrees in Political Science

Have not tracked successes of organization

Faculty need better knowledge of Board

Need to follow through on ideas

Geographic distance of members

Lack of international presence

Youth of organization

Student awareness

Lack of process

Overemphasis on process

Need more funding

Lack of involvement by local CS graduates

Lack of ethnic diversity

In the discussion following this brainstorming session, Merna talked about the gap between pre-service and in-service, noting that FSAB fills that gap. She described it as a transitional period during which there is high anxiety, e.g., transitional period between being a student and joining the work force. FSAB fills that gap with Career Day activities and could assist with other needs. She also stated that these needs change over time, e.g., what about the 20-year professional? Merna noted that older graduates typically want to know if they've made an impact with their career and they

look to academics to verify this. FSAB should be looking at concerns of older graduates as well as recent graduates.

For the next task, Merna gave each committee member a sheet of paper and asked us to look over the above ideas and, selecting from them, make a list of what we thought the priority goals for FSAB were. She suggested that we use the SMART technique (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely goals). Below is a combined list of everyone's No. 1 goals, No. 2 goals, etc.

(1) Goal #1

- a. Increase presence of FSAB with faculty and students with newsletter, website, listserv, etc.
- b. Create FSAB awareness among the majority of former students.
- c. Communicate through meetings, mail-outs, networking, etc. to increase visibility and awareness of organization.
- d. Reaffirm primary purpose of Board and prioritize realistic objectives; work within our limits
- e. Increase membership and participation of former political science students with sub-priority of expanding contributions for scholarships.
- f. Increase active participation on the Board through individual solicitation and blanket mailings to spread and increase the overall workload.
- g. Increase visibility and presence of FSAB with Political Science faculty by having faculty liaison report on FSAB activities at Faculty meetings.
- h. Improve or increase the prestige of the Political Science Department and TAMU.

(2) Goal #2

- a. Increase membership and activities of FSAB; new people means new ideas and maybe \$\$\$.
- b. Distribute first current student newsletter for Fall 2001.
- c. Increase membership: can be accomplished more effectively once visibility is increased; group will have greater impact with more members to help.
- d. Focus efforts to achieve each stated objective
- e. Communicate presence and purpose better to current students.
- f. Enhance student participation in Career Days and any other Board activities to increase awareness of both the program and future opportunities.
- g. Recruit and place in leadership more Political Science M.A.s and Ph.D.s on FSAB Board by Fall 2001.
- h. Attain 100% job placement upon graduation (within three months).

(3) Goal #3

- a. Increase participation of students with FSAB Career Day through incentives such as extra credit in classes, free food, etc.

- b. Organize first annual Practitioners vs. Academicians Day to bring professors up to speed about real world demands.
- c. Increase funding: can increase funding to support activities with a greater membership base.
- d. Communicate achievements of Board to alumni (correlation of Board activities and benefits to students and Department).
- e. Expand help with career preparation beyond career day (e.g., workshops, other developmental experiences for current students).
- f. Solicit donations to the Board through outreach and one on one solicitation.
- g. Increase visibility and presence of FSAB among current students by creating a newsletter once per semester communicating Career Day, FSAB members willing to serve as mentors, Department accomplishments, etc.
- h. Increase substantially the involvement of former students in decision-making and policy development.

(4) Goal #4

- a. Increase fundraising by identifying and contacting all interested groups (not just Poli Sci graduates).
- b. Recruit new Board members.
- c. Institutionalize lines of communication with faculty so they can assist FSAB and vice versa.
- d. Enhance tracking of Board success in measurable areas, i.e., how many students were connected to jobs as a result of FSAB?
- e. Increase and develop more internships for students—both with companies, government, etc. Create Internship Day?
- f. Place more graduates in leadership and in positions of authority and power.
- g. Increase student awareness of active membership after graduation.
- h. Increase membership within state and nation and then go international.
- i. Increase faculty awareness and participation in FSAB, i.e., attendance.
- j. Improve ethnic diversity of membership.
- k. Reward the Board for its successes.

Following the prioritization of goals, Merna compiled them into one list on the flip chart. She gave each of us a set of stickers and told us to place them next to the three goals that we thought were most important. Based on the number of stickers next to each goal, Merna was able to identify for us the top three goals of the committee. Our next task was to take these three goals and identify action steps that would need to be taken to make them happen. She also asked for a timeline for each step and a suggestion of who would most likely be responsible for each step. The top four goals, in order of their priority, are summarized below along with their action steps.

- (1) Increase visibility and presence with Political Science faculty and students.

- a. Initiate newsletter for current students; begin in fall 2001 or spring 2002; responsibility of undergraduate office with help of FSAB member and student representative.
  - b. Increase FSAB presence at faculty meetings; once a year; responsibility of Department Head.
  - c. Host more mixers; plan one for fall 2001 Career Days; responsibility of FSAB.
- (2) Increase active participation on Board.
- a. FSAB members should begin soliciting membership with telephone calls in Houston area (maybe Austin); begin calls in September/October 2001; responsibility of FSAB officers.
  - b. Those responding to telephone invitations to membership will receive a letter from Department Head along with an interest survey and membership application; begin November 2001; responsibility of Pat Hurley and Shawn Carlson.
  - c. Make job specific requests to new members—matching jobs with talents/interests and defining limited time frame of commitment; request as needed; responsibility of FSAB officers.
  - d. Coordinate a mass mailing to all 4000 graduates, inviting them to join FSAB; late winter or early spring 2002 (separate from newsletter mailing and dependent upon available funds); responsibility of Shawn Carlson.
  - e. Repeat process as necessary, probably on yearly basis.
- (3) Increase funding.
- a. Develop list for one-on-one solicitation (focus on Houston and Dallas, clear names with TAMF, use student workers to set appointments for small group meetings in homes); begin 8-31-01 with initial list of names by November; responsibility of Shawn Carlson.
  - b. Send membership renewal letters and follow-up with telephone calls; annually in July (August this year after annual meeting); responsibility of Shawn Carlson and student workers.
  - c. Develop marketing kit for large donors (touts accomplishments of FSAB on behalf of students); plan by October 1 with kit complete by December 31; responsibility of Executive Committee plus Shawn Carlson and Mike Balog and Leanne South (Director of College Relations).
  - d. Sell FSAB as a philanthropical society; begin fall semester 2001; responsibility of Mike Balog.
  - e. Institute Kroger card or other means of automatic donation; begin by fall semester?; Mark Frugoni will send sample, Shawn Carlson will investigate.
  - f. Find corporate sponsorship for newsletter; investigate feasibility and any legal problems during fall semester (Shawn); solicit sponsorship during spring semester (FSAB).
  - g. Find corporate sponsorship for Career Day; begin by ?; FSAB will identify and solicit.

- (4) Enhance student participation in Career Day and other activities.
  - a. Initiate extra credit for students in 209 and upper level classes who attend Career Day; October 2001; responsibility of individual professors.
  - b. Initiate newsletter update; when ?; responsibility of undergraduate office.
  - c. Compile e-mail list of students; ongoing; responsibility of undergraduate office.
  - d. Utilize website for announcements; ongoing; responsibility of Mike Balog and Brad Epps.

When this exercise was completed, Merna gave each of us a worksheet to help revise the existing mission statement of the Board in the future if we wish. The following are each individual's responses to the four statements on that sheet.

- (1) The purpose of FSAB is...
  - a. To provide assistance and advice to current students and the Department of Political Science.
  - b. To create a strong and organized network of former political science students.
  - c. To provide career guidance and monetary support to current students in the Department of Political Science.
  - d. To assist students, graduating students, and former students expand on their experiences in the Department during their transition into life after A&M.
  - e. To assist current students and to foster continued excellence in the Department.
  - f. To support the Department of Political Science through financial assistance, career development for students, communication to former students regarding current student successes in the Department, serve as a linkage between current students, former students, and the Department.
  - g. To provide advice to the Department Head and faculty as to how to professionally develop the students.
  - h. To enhance the experiences of students looking for their direction.
- (2) By (strategies, methods, actions used)...
  - a. Facilitating interaction among current students, faculty, and former students.
  - b. Holding annual meetings, publishing quarterly newsletters, and hosting periodic social events.
  - c. Sponsoring Career Day and providing financial assistance through membership donations and other fundraising activities.
  - d. Communicating to students and the community the benefits of the degree and providing real assistance to students via Career Days and support groups.
  - e. Identifying career opportunities for current students; helping students plan future careers; identifying and/or funding scholarships for current

students; fostering good relations with faculty; and serving as liaison between Department and those who hire its graduates.

- f. Sponsoring Career Days and providing financial assistance through Sustaining Memberships.
- g. Using publications, guest speakers, and former students to raise funding.
- h. Utilizing the time, resources, and experiences of existing and prospective members who are former students.

(3) So that (expected outcomes)...

- a. A network of experts and advisors can be established to assist our constituencies.
- b. We can establish a successful environment for our current and future political science students to benefit from.
- c. Students have additional resources available to them to guarantee their successful completion of education and career goals.
- d. Students see the variety of opportunities available to them with their degree and the Department receives more recognition and interest by faculty and new potential students.
- e. Students may successfully complete degrees in political science at A&M; utilize their political science education in satisfying careers; and use those careers to enhance educational opportunities for future students.
- f. The students feel a sense of accomplishment upon graduation.
- g. Students will have a better understanding of the vast array of opportunities available to them now and in their career endeavors.

(4) Which can be measured by...

- a. The number of satisfied students, the growth of scholarship monies, and increased membership in FSAB.
- b. Tracking fundraising dollars, job placement events, and educational opportunities.
- c. Job placement.
- d. New membership on the Board by graduates, more fundraising opportunities, and more faculty interest.
- e. The number of students funded with scholarships, the number of students placed with assistance through the FSAB network, and the number of students who join FSAB after graduation.
- f. The number of students receiving job offers, internships, and scholarships.
- g. The availability of selected job and career opportunities in political science fields.
- h. The number of students attending FSAB functions, connected to outside sources, and ultimately finding their place in the workforce.

The scheduled tasks were completed around 3PM and we thanked Merna for her help. There was some brief discussion among the committee members and the meeting was adjourned by 3:30PM.