

Minutes  
Advisory Council  
Department of General Business  
Spring 2009

**Thursday, February 19, 2009**

Dr. Tim Clipson hosted the advisory council members and Department of General Business faculty for a Cajun dinner at his home on the shores of Lake Sam Rayburn. It was a great night of food and fellowship.



**Friday, February 20, 2009**

After a brief welcoming reception, the Advisory Council quickly got down to business.



**Members in attendance:**

Gary Lee Ashcraft  
Micah Love  
Russell Marshall  
Ken Murphy  
Ron Smith  
Kim Wier  
Phillip Yates  
Chazzerea Williams  
Carly Rucker

Debbie DuFrene  
Tim Clipson  
Ann Wilson  
Florence Elliott-Howard  
Marcus Cox  
Tarek Aly

## **State of the Department**

Dr. Debbie DuFrene presented an overview of the department's accomplishments during the past year. Some of the highlights included:

- The creation of an internship coordinator position for the department and an expanded emphasis on internships for students (see below).
- A report on the 2008 study abroad program and the upcoming 2010 program to England, France, Belgium and Germany.
- The development of a new graduate level course designed to strengthen our students written communication skills.
- The impact of the new 120 hour degree requirement that was mandated by the state legislature. Previously the general business degree was 130 hours.



## **Advisory Council Reports on Marketing and Student Recruitment**



During the morning session, the Advisory Council members reported on the department website, newsletter and brochure. Regarding the website, council members suggested:

- Arrange information on the page by user group (prospective students, alumni, corporate partners, etc.)
- Make the site easy to find within the larger SFA web site.
- Make the department web site “Google friendly” so that it will be easy to find with a Google search.
- Provide a video link on the front page.
- Reduce the amount of text on the front page.
- Use drop down menus to allow users to see what information can be found on those links.
- Make it easy for the user to contact the department. Provide a photo and phone number of the department chair on the front page.
- The content of the web site needs to remain fresh. It should be updated regularly and reflect what is happening within the department.
- Provide a way for instant communication to be achieved via the web site. This might be accomplished with the use of a few student blogs where students could share information about what it is like to be a student in the department.
- Use photos to show what is going on in the department. Need to “illustrate the personal side” of the department and make it clear that faculty are approachable.
- Need student testimonials in video clips. Small bite-size pieces of information.

Regarding the brochure, council members commented:

- Liked the fact that it was easy to find the contact information on the brochure.
- Need to emphasize that it is ok if students are not sure what area they want to major in when they enroll in SFA.
- Need to change the photo on the front of the brochure. Possibly, show students in student attire. Need a photo that says “This is business.” Need to “brand” the department with a specific look or image.

The council was given a presentation on the new department e-newsletter by Tarek Aly, Graduate Assistant in the department. The council agreed that this was a major improvement over the previous PDF version and offered suggestions on layout and design.

### **Luncheon and Reports on Internships**



Special luncheon guests included:

- ❖ Violet Rogers, Dean
- ❖ Mike Stroup, Associate Dean
- ❖ Jeff Davis, Director of the SFA Alumni Association
- ❖ Sherri Mullican, Director of SFA Career Services
- ❖ Treba Marsh, Chair, Schlief School of Accountancy

Dr. Susan Jennings provided an update on the internship program in the department. Jennings informed the council that she has been charged as the internship coordinator and is currently supervising nineteen students with local and regional businesses or non-profit organizations. “Based on the feedback you provided us last year, we realized that we needed to strengthen our internship offerings. Historically, we have 3 or 4 students enrolled in an internship. This semester we have increased that number to nineteen.”

Jennings showed the council members the website she uses to track the progress of each student and to share information about the course content. “The students in the internship program have to do more than just go to work.” They are also required to complete modules such as: Keys to Success (at the internship), Writing an Effective Resumé, Managing Personal Finances, and Conducting Yourself at Business Social Functions.



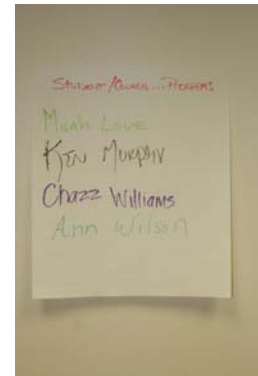


Next, Katherine Pierson, a general business major in the internship program, shared her experience with the Buckle, a national retail chain. Pierson was recognized by the Buckle's corporate office for having the highest sales volume for the nation in the month of December. This was the first time that the Lufkin store ever received this honor. Pierson said that the store manager hugged her and said, "You've put Lufkin on the map!" Pierson was also recognized for being one of the top 10 sales persons in the nation for the month of January. Pierson also shared that she has now been given the responsibility of opening and closing the store. "When people call up and ask to speak with the manger, that's me!" said Pierson.

### Afternoon Break-Out Sessions

During the afternoon session, the council members and faculty self-selected to participate in break-out teams dealing with one of three topic areas:

- ❖ Student Programs/Council Activities
- ❖ Distinct Identity for the Department
- ❖ Development/Fundraising



### Student Programs / Council Activities

- Allow students to shadow a professional for a day to make sure that the company offering the internship will be a good fit for the student. "Test before you invest."
- View the internship program as a good way to brand the department.
- Use the internships as a recruiting tool for the department.
- Develop a competition to put students in front of potential employers.
- Use social networking to reach out to students at other universities for a broader regional perspective. Joint-institution projects could add excitement and relevance for students.

### Distinct Identity for the Department

- “General is too general.”
- If we can’t come up with a new name for the department, then use a tag line to better describe what the department is about.
- The department offers a “global view of business”. An inter-disciplinary view of business.
- “General business tells us nothing about what you offer.” Look at other universities to see what they call their department.
- Offer “a place to come home to” at SFA’s homecoming for general business alumni.

### Development / Fund Raising

- The department typically receives between \$2,000 and \$4,000 a year in gifts from alumni and friends. The funds are used to support student groups, buy additional classroom materials for professors, assist with faculty development, offer financial assistance for study abroad programs, pay for luncheons such as the one for the advisory council and pay for award ceremonies for students.
- We need to educate and inform our alumni about the need for development and how their financial gifts are used.
- We need to identify projects that alumni may want to support.
- Study the Obama campaign and their use of electronic communication to raise money.
- Pursue ideas for branding the department.
- Every communication with alumni and friends can’t be about asking for money. We have to “love on them some.”
- The department needs a development plan with stated fundraising goals.



### Officer Election

The council determined, for continuity purposes, that the vice chair will become the chair of the council after serving one term as vice chair. Ken Murphy was then appointed Chair and Gary Ashcraft was nominated and appointed Vice Chair.