

# **MINUTES**

## **Funeral Service Education Advisory Committee**

Date: Thursday, October 25, 2007

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: room 127 Baker-Gaines Central Campus

Recording secretary: William Thompson

Members present: Mr. Eason Andrews, Mr. Gary Cooper, Ms. Roslyn Green, Ms. Kathy Griffin, Ms. Agnes M. Harris Hunter, Ms. Annie Jones, Mr. Perry Pinkard, Mr. Martin Powers, Mr. Allen Rice, Mr. Albert C. Sharpe, Mr. Philip B. Skeen, Mr. Dennis Trahan, Ms. Eunice Willis, Dr. James Lowe, Dr. Charles Blackledge, Ms. Ann Mantel

Members not present: Mr. Jim Baldwin (excused), Mr. Bobbie Brown, Mr. Carl Lynaum, Ms. Tammie Pugh, Dr. Leroy Riddick, Ms. Sarah Spivey, Dr. Harold Toliver (excused)

Guests:

### **TOPIC DISCUSSION ACTION**

#### I. Call to order

William Thompson called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

#### II. Meditation

Attendees observed a moment of silent meditation

#### III. Introductions & greetings

Dr. Blackledge introduced Ms. Ann Mantel, and Dr. Lowe, upon his arrival.

Self-introductions offered by other committee members.

Dr. Lowe advised that all technical programs are under review for the purpose of determining viability of each, which is not based solely on enrollment. "We will continue to go forward" with expectations for the program to thrive.

#### IV. Discussion items

An open, town hall-style discussion followed that addressed those items listed on the agenda (State of Bishop State Community College, State of FSE Program, Employer's needs, Revitalizing FSE symposium and Funeral Director certificate program).

Mr. Thompson reviewed viability legislation including role and function of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education as well as qualitative and quantitative viability criteria (reference letters to Lowe and Mantel dated August 20, 2007 and to Members dated October 17, 2007). The FSE program strongly meets qualitative viability standards, but does not meet quantitative viability standards (i.e. 7.5 graduates per year).

Mr. Trahan spoke to the quality of the program, Bishop State's FSE program is one of the best anywhere - - graduates have become funeral home owners and managers. Online courses should be offered to accommodate students. Mr. Trahan stated that he believes enrollment could be tripled by meeting market demands. Mr. Trahan spoke of Mr. Thompson as a great instructor who provides students the tools needed to be successful through comprehensive review and board exams – "the school needs to support Mr. Thompson's efforts."

Mr. Thompson spoke to the loss of students from Mobile and Pensacola to other FSE programs. Adequate investments of human and financial resources could increase enrollment by minimizing the loss of students from within the college's service area and, possibly, by attracting students from outside the college's service area.

Ms. Hunter and Mr. Trahan spoke to the inoperable on-campus preparation room. Ms. Hunter states that the program should be self-contained - - all the training and skills should be available at the college.

Mr. Thompson advised that the program will continue to utilize Radney Funeral Home for embalming labs.

Mr. Powers, Mr. Trahan, and Mr. Thompson offered comments on funding issues affecting the program.

Mr. Powers stated that the program is in the position to serve the public. However, inadequate funding with only one instructor places limitations on the students, the instructor, and the program. Mr. Powers also noted that committee members support the program and that committee members' race, gender, job positions, and geographic disbursement are representative of the larger "community" served by the FSE program. Mr. Powers stated that the college has an image problem—not the right amount of funding, diversity in teaching, and instructional delivery methods (in-class and on-line).

Mr. Cooper offered great support for the program and emphasized the population differences between Jefferson State and Bishop State's service areas, as well as the difference in the numbers of FSE instructors at Jefferson State and Bishop State. Mr. Cooper advised Ms. Mantel on the importance of community involvement.

Mr. Thompson questioned the validity of actions and statements suggesting the lack (or limited) funds contributing to the long term, on-going, limited resources allocated to the FSE program. Mr. Thompson reported that most recently he was told, "You don't have enough students to pay your salary." Mr. Thompson continued by stating that students' tuition is inadequate to financially support the college's or the FSE program's operations. "If students' tuition is all we had to depend on, there would be a lot of people who would lose their jobs at Bishop State, including administrators, faculty, and staff." Mr. Thompson referenced the college's financial ability to pay \$10 million to build the Business and technology Center, \$8 million in financial aid due to heightened cash-monitoring status, in addition to funds being made available for a public relations campaign, renovation and expansion of facilities housing technical programs, as well as a comprehensive study of the college for developing a strategic plan.

Mr. Trahan states that funds should be made available to enhance the FSE program's operations.

Mr. Trahan stated that the objective of the program is to educate those in the field in preparation to pass the National Board Exam.

Dr. Blackledge stated that he is not ready to give up on the program, yet.

Mr. Thompson stated that the program is salvageable.

Dr. Blackledge and Mr. Thompson worked together to take corrective action leading to students' completion in a timelier manner. To that end, Dr. Toliver was hired to teach two courses during the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters, respectively. Dr. Blackledge approved FSE 203, Embalming Lab being taught during the summer 2007 term.

Mr. Cooper extended appreciation to Dr. Blackledge for the leadership he has provided to the FSE program and for approving embalming lab being taught during the summer 2007 term.

Mr. Thompson advised that he scheduled 6 FSE courses for the spring 2008 semester. Two of these are upper-level courses and four are introductory-level courses. Mr. Thompson submitted a personnel action form requesting that Dr. Toliver be hired to teach two of the introductory-level courses. Mr. Thompson further stated that the FSE curriculum needs revisions.

Ms. Mantel addressed removing the 3 *hard* sciences from the curriculum and replacing them with courses available in the Common Course Directory and those courses not in the Common Course Directory used by Jefferson State's FSE program.

Mr. Pinkard indicated interest in developing a partnership between Bishop and Radney Funeral Home whereby the funeral home would hire more apprentices that would attend Bishop State for their educational requirements.

Mr. Thompson clarified the difference between apprenticeship and internship.

Dr. Blackledge suggested that the committee develop concrete recommendations.

Mr. Thompson acknowledged that recommendations move us forward – to overcome concerns associated with the program.

Mr. Pinkard and Mr. Powers sought guidance on how to proceed.

Mr. Thompson advised that the committee should consider past recommendations that have gone unanswered as foundation for their recommendations.

Mr. Powers suggested that an outside speaker address the committee as a part of their continuing education, in addition to sponsoring another seminar in March 2008.

Mrs. Griffin questioned Ms. Mantel as to her role and function and suggested that administration sufficiently support the program so that improvement and growth may be realized.

Mr. Thompson raised national issues as to the funeral director-only curriculum. The committee expressed little interest.

Mr. Thompson expressed appreciation to Mr. Gary Cooper, Ms. Roslyn Green, and Ms. Rosa Scott for their contributions to the program

Summarily, points discussed/addressed included:

A. quality of graduates, their success and professional longevity;

B. quality of education at Bishop State;

C. the immediate need for on-line instruction;

D. the numbers of local-area students initially choosing other colleges or choosing to leave Bishop State due to Bishop State's lack of distance education in FSE (related to students' job and family responsibilities);

E. lack of advertising at national and local conventions;

F. need for additional faculty member(s) to enhance programmatic quality, growth, and involvement in professional associations;

G. evidence of broad-based community support for the program across racial and gender lines;

H. enhanced on-campus facilities;

I. partnering with SCI Mobile region (Mr. Pinkard and Ms. Hunter indicate their desire to hire more apprentices who can attend the FSE Program).

J. commitment to make the FSE program better.

K. "If we can't do it right, then don't do it at all" (referring to the FSE Program).

L. options for minor curriculum changes – 4 introductory-level courses and 2 upper-level courses on schedule for spring semester, 2008. Also, run summer term classes (related to students' heavy academic load in 3<sup>rd</sup> semester courses and students' success).

M. options for major curriculum changes – initiate effort to create state-wide FSE curriculum utilizing courses currently listed in the Common Course Directory and those courses utilized by Jefferson State Community College's FSE program that are not listed in the Common Course Directory.

N. success of past FSE Symposiums

The committee made three recommendations:

1) Mr. Thompson compile a list of unanswered recommendations from State Program Review documents, FSE Advisory Committee minutes, and ABFSE accreditation documents and submit those to administration for immediate action;

2) one of the walls in the FSE area is used as a Memory Wall to memorialize deceased graduates of the Bishop State FSE Program.

3) Mr. Thompson & Mr. Skeen identify a date in March for the 2<sup>nd</sup> York Casket presentation

V. Minutes from May 3, 2007

Minutes were approved with the addition of Mr. Jim Baldwin's name recorded as Member Present.

VI. Special Recognition

Mr. Thompson offered special recognition to Ms. Rosa Scott, secretary, for her assistance in preparing for the Advisory Committee Meeting and other critical FSE functions. Also recognized for outstanding leadership was Mr. Gary Cooper, outgoing student representative to the FSE Advisory Committee and Ms. Roslyn Green, newly appointed student representative to the FSE Advisory Committee.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

VIII. Repast

Participants enjoyed food and fellowship.