Task Force 1: A Response from the Students  
by Eric Hinojosa, ASMSU Academic Assembly Chairperson

As a member of Task Force 1, one of the things that I continually spoke to was the need to consider what effect the changes that were being suggested to increase faculty voice in the governance system would have on student involvement and student voice. I was often told that the student issues were not something that the committee needed to consider, that they could be handled during the implementation phase. Now that we are at a stage where we are making serious decisions about whether the recommendations of TF 1 should be implemented and means of doing so, I feel it is important to share them with you. It is my feeling that the university community would be losing out on valuable input from the students if the recommendations of TF1 were put into motion without significant reworking. I've narrowed the problems with the report down to the three issues that would affect student representation the most.

1.) Marginal representation from students on ‘The Steering Committee’ (TSC).
   
a. Under the proposed changes, TSC would seat one undergraduate as an *ex officio* member with the power to vote only “on matters not reserved to faculty.”

   - Under the current system, students carry the potential of three voting seats on the Executive Committee of Academic Council. This includes the Chairperson of the Academic Assembly, a Representative from the Academic Assembly; the third seat being the Chairperson of UCSA, should that seat be held by an Undergraduate which tradition dictates to be so.

b. To give students marginal representation on the body responsible for setting the agenda within the governance system is without question, unacceptable. Students are a vital component of the governance system whose voices need to be heard.

2.) It’s a Faculty Matter.

   “*Ex officio* members of TSC [will] have voting rights on all matters not reserved to faculty.”  The domain of faculty is spelled out by TF1 in appendix 1 of the committee's report, which in part, states:

   - The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.”

   a. If taken literally, this broad definition of faculty domain would allow almost everything considered by the governance system to bypass any meaningful student voice or vote. Issues acted upon in the past that could be deemed “faculty matters” include but are not limited to:

   - The proposal to establish Academic Minors
   - The Working Group for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education
   - The proposal for the creation of the New Residential College
- The proposal for the creation of the College of Music
- The proposal to establish a Council for Liberal Learning
- All curriculum changes proposed by UCC

b. Even if we assume that “matters reserved to faculty” were to only include matters handled by the University Committee on Faculty Policy & Tenure and the University Committee on the Budget (since the TF1 report specifies they will have no student members), the university would still be losing out on valuable student input. Currently, we have two seats on UCFT, which would be lost under the new system. We are eager to offer our input on the budget. Indeed, we have been doing so in an informal manner for years, as members of the ASMSU Academic Assembly work with Director of the Office of Planning and Budgets to offer limited input. It would benefit the university as a whole to have that input become part of the dialog in the governance system.

3.) The lack of a formal reporting line from the University Committee on Student Affairs.

a. Currently, the UCSA chairperson sits on ECAC, allowing for direct communication between the bodies. Since the ASMSU Academic Assembly Chairperson would fill the “representative undergraduate” seat on TSC, the formal reporting line would cease to exist. Should this happen, students would be left with two options:

- Add a layer of bureaucracy by taking UCSA issues to the Academic Assembly and then to TSC.
- The students on UCSA would have to rely on a faculty liaison to be their voice at TSC meetings.

b. Neither of those solutions will allow for issues to be addressed in an expedient manner by TSC.

I ask you, the faculty, to carefully review the implications of the Task Force 1 report. Please consider the valuable input and diversity of opinion and viewpoints that students bring to the academic governance system. The students are more than happy to continue working with you in hopes of creating a system that can improve both the strength of faculty and student voices – one that does not sacrifice one for the other.