

Re: Senate Mar. 4, 2009

Dear AP Council,

This is a brief summary of the Academic Senate meeting held on March 4, 2009. Prof. Crothers, the IBHE-FAC Representative, started the meeting. Concerning the possible stimulus package coming from Washington, Crothers commented, "Frankly, I don't think a lot is likely to come to us." The State Stabilization Fund has earmarked about \$2 billion to come to education in Illinois, but ISU is not in bad enough shape to get any of it. Students, however, will probably benefit, mostly through a rise in Pell Grants and Work Study. The UofI has been hit harder by the recession. Their representative noted that faculty and staff there would be furloughed for two or three days of their contracted pay.

As usual, what followed were Administrator remarks. Dr. Bowman noted Senator Brady's announcement that he was going to run for governor. Brady noted that it would be almost impossible to squeeze 4-5 billion dollars in cuts from the state budget without some effect on education. Though he started with the bad news, Dr. Bowman noted that President Obama's stimulus package and 2010 budget proposal had some "interesting features for higher education." One was tying the Pell Grant Program to an inflationary policy, thereby making it an entitlement. The other was that students would get loans directly from the government, rather than banks.

The President continued with some evidence to demonstrate that the economic landscape has been gradually changing for decades. 25 years ago, tuition revenue was 24% of our unrestricted funds. It is 58% today. He then told us how hard hit Yale and Harvard have been due to their reliance on endowments for operating budgets. So, that is good news for us. "There is a lot of bright news for us," he continued. Four areas we can really feel good about are: 1) our operating budget is \$47 million higher today than in 04; 2) Since 03 we have provided over \$20 million in faculty and staff salary increases; 3) our reputation in Washington is very good; and, 4) we just allocated \$1.3 million in new nonrecurring funds toward a \$2.8 million upgrade for Stevenson to fix much that is wrong there. (He mentioned there were six bright spots, but I only counted four.) He concluded, "We certainly have challenges ahead of us, but the gloom and doom that is, unfortunately, a fixture doesn't entirely apply to us."

V.P. Adams clarified some remarks he made in the last Senate meeting about the Careers fair. Basically, he said, businesses are coming to hire our students, though the numbers of companies coming has been smaller. He also set the record straight that Caterpillar canceled their offer to employ nine of our students and provide 18 with internships.

In the question answer session, Senator Lonbom noted, concerning Chief Swan's earlier appearance, that they do a great job but that their numbers are low. V.P. Adams answered this concerning by noting that VP Bragg had approved the hiring of 2-3 new officers. Plus, he noted, though our numbers are low compared to Northern IL University, we have a much larger town and three other police departments in the vicinity to provide security for our campus. President Bowman stepped in as well to add that most of the crime here was property crime and "the usual" drug offenses but that there was very little violent crime at ISU and has been that way for fifty years. Noting that his daughter and wife were here on campus, he emphatically

stated, "More is always better, but on balance, compared to other big campuses, this is a very, very safe place."

V.P. Bragg followed to reassure everyone "not to panic" concerning the fiscal crisis. He noted, "The university is 152 years old. We have been through these things before. Yes, this one is going to be a little bigger storm than we have hit in the past, but we have the staff who have been through these situations before. We know what to do....That doesn't mean there won't be some pain; just stay the course and we will get through it."

It was almost a relief to get to the Action Items, as any more gloomy news or calls to stay the course would have tipped some over the edge. The first policy that passed was a Withdrawal Policy that allows for students to withdraw from the university without penalty if it is for health reasons.

That was about all of interest. We are all ready for Spring Break. I am sure more good news will follow. In the meantime, enjoy.

Sincerely,

Ron

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