March 27, 2008
Academic Senate Report

Dear AP Council,

Last night the Senate met. We heard a report from Kurt White, from the Faculty Advisory Committee to the I.B.H.E., received reports from administrators, discussed one action item concerning an addition to the Senate Blue Book and received one action item concerning a “Sense of Senate Resolution in Support of Institutional Artifact Portfolio for General Education Assessment.”

Guest Speaker

Professor White shared with the Senate demographic information, which had been gathered by the Faculty Advisory Council and presented to the Governor’s task force for the Master Plan, called “The Public Agenda for Illinois Higher Education: Planning for Career and College Success.” The conclusions he shared included that “the state needs to reduce disparities between whites and minorities in high school completion, college participation and college completion,” primarily because whites, according to the data, continue to be better educated than minorities but represent a shrinking percentage of the IL population that is younger than 65. In addition, they thought the state needed to reduce geographic disparities, do much more to link innovative assets to economic development and address affordability. Basically, what they are saying is that the state needs to look at Bloomington/Normal and Urbana/Champaign as models of dynamic communities that are so in part because of the universities in them.

Administrator Remarks

Dr. Bowman followed and discussed the re-authorization of the Higher Education Act, which is problematic. As a member of the American Council on Education, which is lobbying on our behalf, we are among a number of schools concerned with the re-authorization process. According to the president, the language in the act limits the Department of Education’s ability to use accrediting agencies to regulate and/or control colleges and universities. But, there is also language that may give state institutions more responsibility in policing illegal downloading, for example. Although recent studies indicate that only 3% of illegal downloading happens through campus networks, according to Bowman, colleges are easy targets. There is also problematic language about requiring universities to send an alert to the campus within 30 minutes, though the President feels the language is too vague concerning what kinds of alerts this includes.

The remainder of President Bowman’s remarks concerned Pell Grants, freshman applications, and fundraising. Pell Grants have been increased by $250; applicants are up 10% over where they were last year; and, we have raised $6 million and should be able to get to 10 by the end of the fiscal year.
Provost Murphy followed and encouraged everyone to go to the budget presentations next year. According to Provost Murphy, “You get a real sense of how much we have accomplished and also a real sense of all the collaboration between our units. The strategic planning moves from the faculty up, so this is not top-down strategic planning.” She also noted that they were presently initiating a searches for the deans of CAST and Business.

Dr. Adams talked about the death of Nicholas Reeves, a senior ready to graduate in May, who died in a car crash over the weekend. There was a request to grant his degree posthumously, though that decision will be made in Academic Affairs and the College of Business. VP Adams also noted that President Bowman signed the new Campus Dining Plan. “In case this plan is not to the liking of faculty and staff,” he noted, “you should be aware that students living in the residence halls were the top priority.” There are, however, options for faculty and staff as well as others.

Vice President Bragg followed with a grim portrait of the cash flow. Apparently, though we are not in the pickle that some institutions are in, the problems in the credit market as well as the municipal bond market affected us “a little bit.” He also noted that they were making progress on the Stevenson-Turner life, health and safety issue. He hopes that the Capital Development Board will issue bonds at the end of the month so ISU can pay its contractors. He concluded that decommissioning of Walker-Dunn-Barton has been set for April 18th and they are on target for the summer move-in to 1101 North Main. Alumni, University Advancement, Development, Marketing, Communications, and conferencing will all be moved there.

Committee Reports

Senator Lonbom from Administrative Affairs and Budget talked about the replacement of the information system in Human Resources. “It is about at the breaking point,” she said, “if not past it.” They have identified two vendors, Oracle and SunGard, and will make a decision by late 2008, they believe. Senator Bragg noted that they had allocated $5 million for the entire project, which includes software and all the preliminary work done so far.

Action Items

The University Hearing Panel section of the Bluebook, as proposed by the Rules Committee, was unanimously approved without revision. Basically the changes now give students a voice in the selection of member of the University Hearing Panel.

There was also an approval for a “Sense of the Senate Resolution in Support of Institutional Artifact Portfolio for General Education Assessment.” Earlier this year Mardell Wilson presented a program concerning these institutional artifact portfolios and their use in assessment. Chairman Holland described it as “incredibly non-invasive.”

The Senate adjourned and will meet again on April 9th.
Sincerely,

Ron

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