April 11, 2008
Academic Senate Report

Dear AP Council,

On Wednesday the Academic Senate met for a grueling session, from which I think I am still trying to recover. We had two presentations from the Green Team and Deb Smitley, Co-Chairperson for the Educating Illinois Task Force. In addition we had remarks from administrators and presentations from committee chairpersons. There is little chance I can be brief in this, but I will try.

**President’s Remarks:**

As he had to leave early to catch a movie, Dr. Bowman started the marathon. He noted that the Higher Education Committee had a number of compliments concerning what we are doing at I.S.U. and were sympathetic concerning the limitation we face as a result in the drop in state funding. Their primary concerns are: 1) the precipitous drop in our operating appropriation since 2002; 2) the rising tuition rates, though they don’t blame us; and 3) deferred maintenance to our buildings. At present our deferred maintenance exceeds the $450 million it was at a couple years ago.

In response to the political posturing concerning state funds, President Bowman was remarkably upbeat when you consider the $800 million in debt that the state has to fill by June 30. “While is sounds like gloom and doom in the press,” he remarked, “I think that we need to take a deep breath and let this process play out.” While letting it play out, it does affect us. For example, this year the government has failed to reimburse us about $1 million in Veterans grants, on top of the $600,000 from last year. The president reassured us that we “certainly are not going to make those students leave,” but it does put us in a bind.

Last, he talked again about his trip to Washington where he met university presidents from around the country dealing with similar issues and his trip to Springfield where he tried to influence those pushing House Bill 4380, which would require universities to buy equipment to control illegal downloading. He also congratulated the College of Education and the College of Fine Arts for having their graduate programs ranked in *U.S. News and World Report*.

**Presentations:**

The first presentation came to us from Chuck Scott, Director of Facilities Mgmt. and Enid Cardinal, the Green Team Sustainability Coordinator. Scott noted that the Green Team had been in existence for eight years and that, as a result, the university community has become much more responsible over those years and has increased recycling, reduced energy consumption and waste production. Enid Cardinal noted that the Green Team has adopted a definition of sustainability, separate from that for the United Nations: “Sustainability at Illinois State is an evolving process, which enhances quality of life and
meets economic, social and environmental needs of the present without compromising resources for future generations.” There was more but I did not catch it. I am sure you can look up more information at: www.greenteam.ilstu.edu. She also noted that the university had received a grant to buy recycling bins and a truck. Last she introduced a student, Kevin Gaughan, as the next presenter. Basically, Mr. Gaughan presented research he has been doing concerning climate commitments available at universities. Even though there a number of agencies a university can join, he was making a case for ISU joining the President’s Climate Commitment to reduce emissions by 80% by the year 2050. Needless to say this is a long-range plan. For more information about this presentation, you can go to the Green Team website, I believe, or I can wait to forward you the notes when they come to me. There were a lot of questions, most of them good.

The second presentation was from Deb Smitley. As she was offering a revised draft of Educating Illinois 2008-14, she kept it short. There were some changes made to the November draft, but according to Smitley they did not change the spirit of the document and were more “structural.” Provost Murphy noted, “For me, almost as important as the plan, is the process that gets you to a plan. I believe one of the things Educating Illinois has done on this campus is to reaffirm a commitment to shared governance.” After a lengthy discussion, primarily from Senator Borg, who wants to keep the goal of becoming Illinois’s university of choice as the number one goal, the Senate approved the changes.

Administrators’ Remarks:

--Chairman Holland noted that 6,500 students voted in the recent election and congratulated SGA.

--Senator Horstein noted that President Bowman signed the SGA Constitution and SGA will now be part of the shared governance process.

--Provost Murphy told us that to date we have received about $18 million in grants and contracts.

--V.P. Bragg told us that Dick Runner would be coming to the next meeting to talk about campus construction projects. In Stevenson, the moving-out will begin on May 13 and continue through the 25th. People will be moving into Williams Hall and Stevenson will be completely shut down over the summer. Move-In dates are from August 4 through the 15th.

Committee Reports:

Academic Affairs: The committee discussed a ten-year limit for courses as pre-requisites proposal. Basically they are going to deal with limiting the number of years a student can use a pre-req. course for credit. Individual departments will decide what those limits are, which will be fun for advisors I am sure. (The last was my editorializing, sorry.)
Administrative Affairs: They discussed the Academic Impact Fund with Kay Moss. There is a bit of a bump in the number of retirements this year and, as a result, there are more job searches (74 compared to last year’s 55 authorized.)

Information Items:

SCERB Grievance Cmte.: Larry Alferink noted that the Student Grievance Committee is named in the Student Code of Conduct. It is a committee that is staffed by the Academic Senate through the Rules Committee and the faculty caucus. It is not in the Blue Book. As a result, they are proposing an addition to the Blue Book.
--They also noted that SCERB may become SAB, Student Appeals Board.

Finance and Planning Committee:

Senator Fazel delivered the committee’s recommendations concerning the university’s priorities. This year we have six:
1) Priority one is to continue efforts to improve competitiveness of faculty and staff salaries by using median salaries rather than averages for judging peer groups. They also want to maintain transparency in the process. This includes raising wages for graduate students and issues of compression.

2) Priority two was “enhancing the student experience.” Primarily this deals with admitting students in good standing without having space available for them in majors. This year we admitted 5,000 for 3,500 major slots. They want the university to support departments and units by providing resources so we can increase our educational capacity. They also call for improving communication between EMAS and departments concerning the allocation of resources. They also made improving the experience of transfer students a priority, as many of the students on the committee thought the university should do a better job. They also wanted to diversify the student body, the faculty and the curriculum as part of our mission.

3) Priority three was to enhance safety and security on campus.

4) Item four was to enhance library resources and that we need to assess the resources of Milner and compare them to the needs of the university and libraries at comparable institutions.

5) Priority five was increasing the operating budget.

6) Item six was distance education, expanded programming and additional courses in summer and winter breaks. (I had a number of problems with this last in our committee, as I thought it was headed in the wrong direction and accentuated impracticable suggestions as well as failing to deal with perceived problems concerning summer school and the mixed-entrepreneurial model that seems to be in place but which no one seems to know about. Nevertheless, it was included.)
Milner Library Resources:

Senator Borg delivered a lengthy letter in endorsement of a Sense of the Senate proposal concerning library funding. Basically, he pointed out the woeful state of funding for arguably the most important entity in a university. He offered us a lot of statistics, which I can pass on when I receive them, as I did not write them all down. In the end, he was asking that the university pledge to increase the operating budget of the library by $250,000 a year until they have added at least $1 million in the next few years to reach the level they were at in the 1970s.

The Provost thought this should be rolled into the Finance and Planning Committee’s call for future analysis. The Senate ultimately sided with Senator Borg and offered its approval of the position paper.

Well folks, that was a long one and I am sure I have put anyone asleep who has attempted to read this far. If you have any questions, I am always at your service. If you would like me to respond in any way, just let me know.

Cheers,

Ron

Ronald M. Gifford, Ph.D.
Assistant Chair/Advisor
Department of History
Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790