September 25, 2008
Re: Senate Report

Dear AP Council,

The Academic Senate met last night, Sep. 24th, for the first time in a month. The following is a brief summary of that meeting.

Shane McCreery, Director of Diversity and Affirmative Action, offered an opening presentation concerning recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups. Due to the university’s lack of any formal policy in this area, President Bowman has charged Mr. McCreery with the task of establishing a small committee to draft a statement concerning diversity and tie it to Educating Illinois.

Basically, McCreery pointed out that the “legal landscape” concerning diversity has changed dramatically since 1978, when the ‘Supremes’ shot down the quota system. In 2003, the University of Michigan cases made the point system for admission of undergraduates impermissible (not sure if this is the same as illegal). The Law School, however, was able to continue to use race and ethnicity as part of its admission and retention. Universities can use these to make up for past discrimination or to promote educational benefits of diversity. Sexual orientation was left off the list because it, along with disability, is recognized as “personal, confidential identifier.” No one at the university may ask a student if they are “disabled” or if they are “gay or lesbian.” Jonathan Rosenthal has been placed in charge of creating a recruitment and retention committee.

There was much discussion concerning the omission of “gay and lesbian” from the committee’s statement, but McCreery clarified that this was “legal cover.” When he asked for a sense of the Senate Resolution, it passed with four in opposition.

Professor Darrell Kruger, the Distance Education Task Force Chairperson, followed with a brief presentation. They have four goals: curriculum (really looking at how these courses are presently taught at ISU); instruction and professional development; infrastructure; and, administrative structure and funding.

Kruger noted that ISU’s experience is consistent with national trends. Over the last five years there has been a steady growth in on-line courses. 2008 was the first year summer distance education enrollment passed that of the academic year. We will undoubtedly hear more about this in the year to come.

Remarks from the chairperson and administrators were brief. Vice President Adams notified us of the death of Jason Nash on September 15th. Dr. Bragg reminded us that ISU’s finances are well protected and “in good shape.” Faculty and staff will see retroactive pay in their September paychecks. He also let us know that he erred last time in discussing Stevenson in that people won’t be getting new furniture.
The last items of business were an approval of the Academic Calendar to include the May interim session.

That was about all. Stay tuned for more excitement next time.

Cheers,

Ron

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