October 22, 2008
Senate Report to AP Council

We began our meeting with another report from Lane Crothers, the IBHE-FAC Representative. Reporting on their latest meeting, he noted that the proprietary institutions in Illinois made a presentation that quantified the “value of degrees.” They had calculated the lifetime earnings for the following categories:

- High School without a diploma--$1 million
- High School Graduate--$1.2 million
- With Some College--$1.5 million
- Associate’s Degree--$1.6 million
- Bachelor’s Degree--$2.1 million
- Master’s Degree--$2.5 million
- Professional Degrees, Lawyers, Doctors--$4.4 million

He concluded, “For those of us with Ph.D.s, that takes you to $3.4 million, but it is worth pointing out that many of us have a stunning level of job security in the contemporary economy.” In addition Crothers noted that they discussed the “Public Agenda,” which the IBHE thinks will help them appeal to state legislators because the tool explains the purpose of higher education; however, he added, “Many of us are much more afraid that this is going to be used as a hammer.” Last in Crother’s comments was mention “dual credit” courses (those courses that can be taken in high school and used for college credit) were creating some concern, primarily because many of these courses are taught by high school teachers using a high school curriculum. As per usual, his comments offered moments of levity that have been sorely absent this semester amid new of one financial crisis after another. Unfortunately, any laughter is uncomfortable laughter as the “Public Agenda,” financial woes and items such as “dual credit” threaten to dramatically change what we think of higher education.

Dan Brady, Republican Representative and member of the Appropriations Committee for Higher Education and the Higher Education Committee in the General Assembly, was our Guest Speaker. In his introduction Dr. Bowman lauded Brady for his support of I.S.U. and higher education.

While Rep. Brady filled us in on dire news concerning the budget, he also let us know that the upcoming General Assembly would be dealing with a number of issues related to higher education. In this context, Brady told us that the General Assembly “took a rather unique approach” to the budget cuts that would affect parks, historic preservation sites, and even the Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse by doing a “fund sweep.” Basically they took money appropriated for other line items and spent it on something else. Though Brady noted that he voted for the re-distribution of $266 million, he was cautiously optimistic because they had no idea how the governor would allocate that money. There followed a number of questions concerning the economy, taxes, the capital budget, and ethic training. Representative Brady concluded his remarks with a personal, and I must add touching and genuine, note concerning how grateful he and his wife are for Illinois State University and the services they provide for him and his family.
President Bowman followed with thanks concerning a successful Homecoming and noted the many donors that were on campus as well as the unveiling of the Alumni Center. He mentioned that our graduation rates are at an all-time high: 69.9%, well above the national average of 56%. Dr. Bowman also mentioned that funding from external grants rose 23% over last year and recognized those responsible—Dr. Custer and Dr. Sakaluk. Last, Dr. Bowman mentioned that President Bush signed a new G.I. Bill, which will provide substantially increased support for veterans.

The rest of the meeting dealt with Council for Teacher Ed. bylaws, the Mennonite College of Nursing Dean Search Committee, and a memo forwarded by Senator Dick Durbin concerning the cost of textbooks. Durbin’s letter noted that the average cost for textbooks is $900 for full-time freshmen; so, he wants professors to provide ISBN numbers, prices, etc. in their course syllabi. Senator Holland added, “I would hate to think that students would start choosing their courses based on the price of a book.” That was it for the October 22nd meeting.

Cheers,

Ron

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