A special meeting of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy was called to order at 1:15 p.m., on Monday, March 14, in 210 Illini Union with Chair Abbas Aminmansour presiding.

The sole purpose of the day’s meeting was to discuss a proposal by Interim Chancellor Easter and Interim Provost Wheeler to close the Institute of Aviation (EP.11.32). Chair Aminmansour welcomed one and all. He noted that a public hearing was held on Tuesday, March 8, and that the Committee has received over 100 comments on the proposed closure. The comments and minutes of the public hearing have been posted on the EPC website, along with other related documents (SEI review, EPC/Senate procedures and reports, faculty vote). [http://senate.illinois.edu/ep/Aviation.htm](http://senate.illinois.edu/ep/Aviation.htm)

Dr. Aminmansour thanked EPC members for their care and diligence in reviewing the materials that have come before the Committee, and he extended his appreciation to everyone who participated in the public hearing. As Chair of the Committee, Professor Aminmansour met with Senate leaders to discuss EPC’s disposition of the proposal and subsequent Senate action on the matter. He indicated that he has scheduled a meeting with Chancellor Easter and Provost Wheeler on Tuesday, March 15, at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the outcome of today’s EPC meeting.

The site for the day’s meeting was moved from the Senate Conference Room to 210 Illini Union in order to provide extra seating for observers. While Chair Aminmansour encouraged EPC members to engage those outside of the Committee who are knowledgeable about various aspects of the Institute, he emphasized that this is not an open hearing and comments from observers would be limited. It was noted that faculty from Human Factors, the AVIA Director, and the Finance Director were present to participate in discussion of this matter.

Discussion began with questions about the transfer of faculty from the Human Factors Division to other colleges. Professor Geil asked whether any incentives were provided and, if given the option, would they return to Human Factors/Institute of Aviation. The two faculty in the audience that responded indicated that they were told the unit was to be disbanded and thus had no choice but to accept an alternate appointment; faculty with zero-time appointments in affiliated units were transferred to those units. Both indicated that they would return to HF/IA if it was given suitable support, but one said he was leaving the University in May. Professor Michael asked about the extent to which faculty had been informed that these changes would occur and the timeline for administrative action in orchestrating the events which led to redistribution of affected faculty. Professor Terry von Thaden, formerly of Human Factors Division and now in GSLIS, said Human Factors courses are offered in Psychology and Engineering; however, housing the degree programs was not supported by either unit.

The group discussed admissions and enrollment statistics, allocation of state funds, cost-to-educate per credit hour, and comparison of these aspects between the Institute and other academic units. Additionally, the Committee sought clarification on the disparity between figures reported by the Institute and those presented by campus administration.

Attention was given to the fiscal challenges facing the campus and the increasing decline in state funding. Mr. Olsen acknowledged the difficult nature of the decision to recommend closure of the Institute, but that sacrifices must be made in addressing budgetary challenges. The solvency of the Institute was not called into question, as it operates within its allocation of General Revenue Funds; however, the Institute has no
outside funding, a small development program and has seen a significant decline in research funding over the past decade. Professor Michael asked IA staff about the size of the campus endowment and lack of support from the commercial air industry. Director Emanuel responded that IA had only a part-time position in development and that U.S. airlines resist such arrangements. Professor Boppard inquired about grant funding, to which Professor von Thaden responded that most grant awards are now processed through Beckman Institute. The University is awaiting the decision on a Federal Aviation Administration Center of Excellence proposal ($50M contract). [Subsequent to the day’s meeting, it was made known that the UI was not awarded this grant.] Professor Francis spoke against the return of GRF dollars to the campus as justification for closing the Institute, as well as the manner in which faculty were unduly removed from the Human Factors Division.

Other issues were addressed: the process of reassigning faculty in the unit as a prelude to recommending closure, Aviation as a desirable acquisition by another institution, the disposition of AVIA equipment, the impact on services provided by Willard Airport, as well as future federal funding for a new control tower, and the effect on the community. Professor Newcomb pointed out that the materials submitted by Chancellor Easter and Provost Wheeler mention disposition or alternative use of the Institute’s real and other physical assets as sources of “additional savings.” Dr. Wheeler said flight equipment is State property and, while revenues may come back to the University, this was never a motivation for closure. Professor Miller inquired about the impact of closing the Institute and whether commercial flights would be affected. Director Emanuel said air traffic would be significantly reduced and he detailed the status of the new control tower and other FAA services. Associate Provost Marshall spoke of the administration’s commitment to the continued health of Willard Airport and the attention given to Willard in the Stewarding Excellence project team evaluation of the Institute.

Focus then was directed to the Committee’s role in reviewing the proposal (EP.11.32) and the contributions of the Institute of Aviation to the academic mission of the University: (1) consider the value of a baccalaureate degree with pilot training; (2) compare AVIA contributions with those of other academic units on campus; (3) review actual rather than projected GPA of AVIA graduates; and (4) study the future viability of Aviation as an academic unit.

Retired United 747 Captain and current Chairman of the Board of the Chicago Executive Airport E. A. Englehardt spoke to underscore how the airline industry and the FAA have valued the Institute of Aviation. Professor Geil moved the question at approximately 2:50 p.m.; the motion was seconded and, upon vote, approved.

Paper ballots were distributed for a secret vote on whether or not to approve the proposal to close the Institute of Aviation. The motion to approve the proposal was defeated, 4 in favor and 10 opposed. (Chair Aminmansour abstained from voting.)

Chair Aminmansour thanked Committee members for their participation in this process.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Christa Petrillo
Recording Secretary

Approved as amended