

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign Senate
Final;Information

HE.01.05 Report on the IBHE Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting, February 2, 2001

Action Items: Approval of statement on "The Part-Time Faculty Issue" for transmission to the IBHE; sharing recommendations to the IBHE staff on the legislatively mandated survey on use of part-time and non-tenure-track instructors at public universities; agreement to develop a report focused on time-to-degree completion issues.

The FAC met on the Urbana-Champaign campus. Provost Richard Herman welcomed the group, briefly reviewed issues confronting the campus and responded to questions. He stressed the difficulty of maintaining excellence given the inadequacy of our state budget and the need to diversify funding sources including efforts tied to economic development. A planned tuition increase will help meet such needs as library funding, upgrading buildings, integrating information technology in classes, replacing lost faculty (faculty down 12%, enrollment up 9%) and implementing the general education requirements adopted in 1989. The campus is undertaking a review of the general education program asking questions such as whether individuals know how to communicate orally and in writing; whether there is the proper preparation for careers and for a richer life. In response to questions he noted the need to use educational technology both internally and externally; to assess what works and what doesn't; for institutions to decide their mission and role related to educational technology, particularly "distance education." Technology is not cheap, it demands more not fewer resources, and the quality of the educational experience must be preserved. Asked about part-time faculty, he stressed the need for more full-time faculty, particularly in general education courses; appropriate oversight; integrating part-timers into the life of the unit and the learning community and an enhanced role of faculty in hiring, monitoring and evaluating part-timers.

The business meeting was in two parts. The first session focused on materials related to upcoming IBHE meetings. An IBHE staff draft report on access and diversity will be discussed at the IBHE meeting in April with a vote on the final report in June. The IBHE staff will develop the final version by mid-May. The report will emphasize diversity with support of racial and ethnic criteria for admission and financial aid and the need for enhanced preparation at the elementary and secondary level to ready students for college admission. There will be an effort to avoid legalistic issues of affirmative action. (The FAC plans a review of the draft report.)

In discussing the National Report Card (on higher education) the top ranking for Illinois was noted but concern expressed that the report suggests that being "cheap and crowded" is the key to a high rating. Experience suggests this is not the way to achieve a high level of academic quality. One use of the report by the IBHE will be to draw the attention of the public and legislators to the quality that we currently have as a basis for argumentation that we need to protect our investment and build on the quality we have.

There was extensive discussion Report Card's low rating on degree completion. Illinois high school graduation requirements are the lowest in the region and Illinois fails to mesh high school requirements with college admission requirements. The FAC argued for more appropriate weighing of many factors: often students, particularly in community colleges, are not seeking a degree, but pursue hobbies or self-improvement; some with degrees are developing a specific skill or competency; some must work and attend school part-time. Education technology may not be a solution in that it is not cheaper than "normal" campus instruction. Finally, there is an inherent contradiction: as we provide more access and greater diversity in admissions we bring students less and less likely to complete degrees in a minimum time frame. If everyone pursues life-long learning opportunities, the degree completion rate will fall dramatically. The FAC voted to develop a report to the IBHE outlining many concerns about the emphasis on time-to-degree and degree/certificate completion.

The second business session followed subcommittee meetings. The Quality of Education Subcommittee report "The Part-Time Faculty Issue" was adopted and will be transmitted to the IBHE and available on the web.

The Budget and Governance Subcommittee also focused on part-time faculty issues. They urge faculty input in hiring part-time and non-tenure track instructors, annual evaluation, and attention to professional development to ensure appropriate academic quality. There is continuing concern focused on the appropriate ratio of tenured/tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty including part-time instructors. The subcommittee sought input on budget proposals. They are focused on salary catch-up as key followed by rebuilding the faculty: growth in enrollment means more faculty are needed and as tenured faculty retire they are replaced by part-timers or replacements are delayed at least a year. With regard to the capital budget, they are concerned about the priority given to gift buildings and technology while the facilities provided for social science and humanities faculty lag and buildings decay. Many buildings constructed after World War II need renovation. Finally, they are interested in the impact of across-the-board increases vs. merit pay on academic quality.

During the luncheon, the Quality of Education Subcommittee advisory statement to the IBHE staff on the legislatively mandated IBHE survey of all public institutions on the use and conditions of employment of part-time and non tenure-track faculty was discussed briefly without significant additions. The progress in developing the FAC web page was reviewed. (It should be on line in March.)

The Technology subcommittee sponsored a tour of "the Cave" at Beckman following the business meeting. The March 2 FAC meeting's focus is technology with Kathy Gunn discussing the Illinois Virtual University.

The meeting concluded with adoption of a resolution of appreciation to Provost Herman and to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for hosting the FAC meeting.

Ken Andersen
Campus representative to the FAC of the IBHE