

HE.02.02
October 29, 2001

**University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign Senate
Final Information**

HE.02.02 Report on the IBHE Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting, October 2, 2001

The FAC met at the Wyndham Hotel in Lisle in conjunction with the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The morning was spent observing the meeting of the Board.

BHE Board Chair Phil Rock read an administrative order from Governor Ryan asking all state agencies to implement cost-cutting measures and fiscal austerity in expenditures, counseling “prudence not panic.” The letter asked that filling of vacancies, procurement of new equipment and contracts for electronic equipment be curtailed and no transfers between budget lines without Bureau of Budget approval. These restrictions do not apply directly to universities.

Chair Judy Irwin of the Illinois House Committee on Higher Education stated that the year’s good budget recognizes the clear needs of higher education. She complimented the Board for its stress on strengthening higher education access for all Illinois citizens and urged the universities to respond to the growing teacher shortage in elementary and secondary education and the need to improve teacher quality.

Keith Sanders reported that the scheduled October 12 Knight Roundtable focused on maintaining educational quality in Illinois had been postponed in the wake of the September 11 terrorism. Three institutions reported briefly on their “best practices.” (The institutional reports on best practices of community and four-year public and private colleges distributed with the agenda were an inch thick.)

The report of the Commission on Persistence and Degree Completion recommended strategies to encourage students to make timely progress, establish institution-wide retention programs and attract former students back to college. Other initiatives included financial incentives for good high school preparation, alignment of high school and college curriculum content and new ways of funding remedial and development programs. The BHE will undertake the development of a better tracking system to provide accurate information on degree completion. Colleges will be required to report on progress as part of the yearly Institutional Response Report to the BHE.

The Board unanimously adopted a resolution based on the report noted above, the report *Investing in the Future: College Readiness in Illinois*, and two other reports on college readiness. The resolution states that the BHE “supports significantly increasing the percentage of high school graduates who have the knowledge and skills for postsecondary education and the contemporary workplace . . . the early identification and provision of remediation services . . . aligning high school graduation requirements with college admission standards to better prepare students for the rigor of postsecondary study . . . developing statewide consensus on what constitutes minimum college level work and recommending to postsecondary institutions that all students failing to meet minimum standards be placed in remedial coursework . . . supports the

collaborative development of a student record system that can share data across P-16 systems to improve policy, practice and performance of Illinois students.”

Two items focused on implementation of the report on access and diversity. The first directed BHE staff to develop a model “annual report on readiness for college and work” based on discussion and comment from “P-16 partners and other interested stakeholders” for approval at a future date. The second offered information and a rationale for the Board’s August 2001 recommendation that “all high school students take a college prop curriculum.” (This is a controversial recommendation and the degree of legislative support is unclear.)

The most controversial item on the agenda was the vote to give the University of Phoenix a certificate of approval and authorization to operate on-site in Schaumburg and later in the Naperville/Downers Grove area. The University of Phoenix offers on-site degree programs in 22 states. (The University of Phoenix has offered on-line degree programs in Illinois since 1989. BHE approval is not required for their on-line programs because they have no institutional physical presence in the state.) Objections focused on lack of time to consider the recommendation, quality issues, and proper notification of students that the degree programs are not yet approved. Approval for specific degree programs to be offered must come at a later date; this approval merely authorizes Phoenix to proceed to establish the sites and offer courses. It was noted that once a private institution meets the minimum requirements set forth in the law, they must be granted approval while public institutions must demonstrate an unmet need. There was a call for rethinking the legislation on approval standards.

The FAC report to the BHE noted the campuses’ responses to the September 11 tragedy, the support of the FAC for “Campus Equity Week” October 28-November 3 and concern about the University of Phoenix authorization. The FAC report “Competing Values in Serving the Students: Access, Degree Completion and Student Outcomes” was transmitted to the Board. (The FAC chair makes a report at each BHE meeting.)

The FAC conducted routine business during lunch. Five members of the BHE then joined the FAC. The lively discussion focused around issues of the quality of distance education offered by out-of-state providers, the approval of the Phoenix Certificate to Operate and impact of the economic downturn. Various concerns about the ability of public institutions to compete with the private profit making entities in offering courses and degrees were noted in that different requirements are placed on the public institutions and the difference in focus on educational quality. The profit-oriented can focus on only those things that make money, the non-profit publics must serve the full range of programs and student needs. Members of the Board indicated interest in specific suggestions to make for a “level playing field” but felt the public non-profits must compete in the market place. The session concluded with Chairman Rock indicating that the state was coming under ever-greater budgetary restraints due to falling state revenues and the future did not look promising. “The Governor is a strong supporter of education but the money may just not be there next spring.” The Board members thanked the group for a valuable interchange with one indicating an interest in meeting with the FAC again prior to next year’s scheduled October meeting.

Ken Andersen, Campus representative to the FAC of the IBHE