

Report on the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council Meeting of February 20, 2009

The Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) met on Friday February 20, 2009 at the Northwestern University campus in Evanston, IL.

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 AM by Chair John Bennett. FAC member and Northwestern University Vice President Eugene Lowe introduced Northwestern President Henry Bienen. Following are some of the highlights of President Bienen's remarks about some of the university's accomplishments in the fourteen years he has served in that capacity: sponsored research has increased from \$150 million dollars to \$450 million; the drug Lyrica has brought the university about one billion dollars; Northwestern has the 18th largest university endowment in the country which accounts for about 20% of the university's budget; emphasis on teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels with small classes; high academic standards for student athletes; strong study abroad program with about 30% of students participating. President Bienen who will be retiring in the near future said that he still tries to teach one course per semester. He said teaching allows him to communicate with students in a different light. Further, he stated his support for collaboration among peer institutions in the Chicago area and cited examples of such activities between Northwestern, University of Chicago and UIC.

Guest speakers Jennifer Kunde (director of governmental relations at Northwestern University) and Jim Jepsen, (assistant director of governmental relations at the University of Illinois) discussed the recently passed federal economic stimulus package and its impact on higher education, particularly for Illinois schools. They indicated that the package is yet to be fully finalized with details, but noted opportunities for higher education. The state stabilization portion of the package is to help address states' economic and fiscal problems. A significant portion (82%) of the \$54 billion state stabilization funds are set for education. Illinois is set to receive \$2 billion, some of which the governor may choose to use to reverse this year's rescissions in higher education budgets. The state stabilization fund is supposed to help restore higher education budgets back to the 2008 or 2009 levels (whichever is higher). Given that Illinois did not have a cut in its 2008 and 2009 higher education budgets, it is anticipated that K-12 will benefit more from these funds. However, higher education can get funding from "Critical State Services" fund. According to the guests, the stimulus package offers \$17 billion for Pell Grants with additional funds for Work Study and other student aid programs. National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, the Department of Energy and other research funding agencies will receive increased support which have the potential to offer opportunities for universities for additional sponsored research. It was noted that the stimulus package is intended to have a relatively quick impact on the country's economy and that the increase in funds is to provide a temporary, not sustained new funds.

Chair Bennett reported that the IBHE-FAC Executive Committee had had a meeting with Judi Erwin, Executive Director of IBHE, Diane Bazell, new Deputy Director for Academic Affairs and Ocheng Jany, Associate Director for Academic Affairs. The Board plans to change its meeting format due to the newly adopted Public Agenda and the American Diploma Project (see December IBHE-FAC meeting report for more info on these projects). The Chair stated that we need to see if there are new opportunities for FAC to engage in activities relative to these projects that may benefit higher education. He also noted that the FAC Ex Com is trying to enhance our communications with the IBHE and its staff.

I reported that at my initiative a meeting with University of Illinois Vice President Meena Rao, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Walter Knorr, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs / Director of University Outreach and Public Services Charlie Evans, and representatives from the three U of I campuses was upcoming. The purpose of the meeting is for the U of I to coordinate its activities relative to the IBHE.

A discussion was held on the FAC membership rotation and changes were approved for implementation over the next few years to address specific problems with FAC membership relative to private institutions. Public universities always have a representative on FAC who serve for four years and there is a well established system in place for rotation of community colleges. But, rotation of private institutions' membership on FAC is more involved due to the large number of institutions. A number of specific changes for membership of private institutions over the next few years were approved.

Lane Crothers of Illinois State University and Chair of the FAC Legislative Affairs Committee updated members on the group's activities regarding preparing a presentation for the legislators to learn more about the value of higher education to the State, nation and the world.

Dan Tahtinen of Olney Central College reported on behalf of Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee Tim Scherman the activities including the Assessment as well as the Dual Credit papers under preparation. Comments and changes were offered for enhancing these documents. Both documents were approved by the Council.

Dan Tahtinen reported that the Community College Trustees Association is holding its lobby day on April 29. He added that a legislative reception is scheduled in Springfield for Wednesday, March 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the State Museum and encouraged FAC members to attend this reception, if possible.

A discussion was held on the possibility of FAC holding its future meetings via videoconferencing to save travel funds. Most members felt that fact-to-face meetings are very valuable and should continue. In addition, technical difficulties and limited capabilities at some campuses were cited as potential problems. It was agreed that the FAC meetings will continue by members getting together. Currently, FAC meetings take place on a rotation basis at different member institutions' campuses. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has offered to host the May 2010 IBHE-FAC meeting.

The FAC is scheduled to give a presentation to the IBHE on April 7th. A discussion was held on what should be included in our presentation to the Board.

The next IBHE-FAC meeting will be held on March 20, 2009 at Chicago State University. Finally, appreciations were extended to our hosts at Northwestern, Vice President Gene Lowe and President Henry Bienen. It was particularly noted that the folder with information about the Northwestern University was great. The meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Abbas Aminmansour
IBHE-FAC Member