

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

The Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) met on Friday March 20, 2009 at the Chicago State University (CSU) campus in Chicago. Dianne Bazell, IBHE Deputy Director for Academic Affairs, was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by Chair John Bennett. FAC member Devi Potluri welcomed the group to Chicago State and introduced CSU interim president Frank Pogue who offered his welcome and brief remarks to the group before leaving to join the university's Board of Trustees' meeting. Devi also introduced Chicago State Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Sandra Westbrooks. Provost Westbrooks highlighted the diversity and quality of Chicago State's faculty and noted that 85% of the CSU faculty have doctoral degrees with 350 being part of the university's tenure system. She announced that a Center for Teaching and Research Excellence will begin activities at CSU beginning Fall 2009. Provost Westbrooks mentioned that all eligible CSU programs are fully accredited and that two doctoral degrees are offered. She pointed out that CSU offers a number of study abroad programs for students. Provost Westbrooks also described CSU's activities in ensuring attendance and graduation of a higher percent of its students.

Chair Bennett noted that IBHE funding will be brought in line with the Public Agenda. Bazell reported that the new governor values higher education and has exhibited the courage to support tax increase to increase state's revenues, an act that some may consider potentially damaging to the future of a politician. Bazell mentioned that the governor has demonstrated his commitment to higher education through his better than expected proposed budget. The governor's proposed budget indicates an increase in higher education operations plus possible funds for capital projects. Details on the governor's FY 2010 budget proposal regarding higher education were shared with FAC. It was noted that no mandatory furloughs are planned by the State for higher education.

A discussion followed on how the Public Agenda emphasizes areas such as affordability and greater student preparation. It was added that future Board meetings will align with the Public Agenda. Bazell noted that the Public Agenda was mandated by the legislature and that the view about higher education is different at the State level now. She emphasized the fact that the Executive Director of IBHE was invited to attend the governor's budget presentation which did not take place under the previous governor's administration.

IBHE Deputy Director for Planning and Budgeting, Mike Baumgartner, joined FAC via telephone at this time. He indicated that the 2% across the board cut for state agencies proposed by the governor excludes higher education. Baumgartner added that there is a proposed 2% increase in pension contribution rates for future employees including SURS. A 1995 legislation mandated that the state contribution amount for SURS go up to \$702 million. However, the governor proposes to remove the increase. According to Baumgartner, this proposed plan will not affect current employees. Baumgartner said that due to the fact that higher education can benefit from the federal stimulus package, the proposed higher education operating budget is fairly safe. A capital bill is needed to fund capital projects.

A nominations committee consisting of Steve Depasquale (chair), Gene Lowe, and Judi Cameron was established for election of next year's IBHE-FAC officers. Nominations may be sent to any of the nominations committee members. A discussion followed regarding the desire to know the focus of IBHE meetings about a couple of weeks in advance. It was agreed that ideally, related resource material should be shared with FAC members in advance of meetings.

Volunteer hosts for the 2009-2010 FAC meetings are solicited. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has offered to host the May 2010 FAC meeting.

A discussion on the dual credit paper followed. However, due to recent changes in the IBHE meeting format, further discussions were delayed until later. FAC will meet jointly with IBHE on April 7th.

David Bardack of UIC offered an update on the College of DuPage (CoD) situation. See December IBHE-FAC report for more information on this topic. It was suggested that we invite a representative from CoD to attend a future FAC meeting. David will follow up and report at the next IBHE-FAC meeting.

The next IBHE-FAC meeting will be held in Springfield on April 7, 2009 along with the full IBHE meeting. Finally, appreciations were extended to our hosts at Chicago State. The meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Abbas Aminmansour
IBHE-FAC Member