

Report on IBHE Faculty Advisory Council Meeting

January 21, 2011

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The Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) held a regularly scheduled meeting at the University of Illinois at Chicago on Friday January 21, 2011 with 31 member institutions present. The meeting was called to order by Chair Abbas Aminmansour at 8:30 AM. A number of special guests including Dr. Paula Allen-Meares Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Dr. Sylvia Manning, of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Mr. Jeff Mays, President of the Illinois Business Roundtable (IBR) and Dr. Peter Kirstein, VP and Chair of Committee A, AAUP Illinois.

UIC Chancellor Paula Allen-Meares welcomed the group to her campus and spoke about the accomplishments of UIC's faculty, students and staff. She briefly discussed issues important to higher education including budget; implementing the Public Agenda; that higher education is not being viewed as a public good; the increasing focus on outcomes in higher education; access and affordability. She also answered questions from the Council members.

Higher Learning Commission President, Dr. Sylvia Manning spoke next. She sees the following as challenges for higher education: the growth of for-profit education; federal intrusion into higher education which often doesn't make sense; regulation replacing sensibility; Dual Credit; two year colleges offering four year degrees; cost barriers; focus on skill preparation; the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) view extending into higher education; where the blame is placed when students fail; the role of contingent faculty and only giving lip service to quality. She, too, answered questions from the Council members and shared a view about promotion and tenure procedures and values applied at some institutions. However, she noted that HLC is unable to intervene in such instances because it is not empowered to do so. But she added that she had thought about somehow working with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) for addressing such matters. In addition, she stated that institutions will get more distinct and segmented with a narrowing of mission and focus and thus they will need to find and define their niches. She further said that there will be more of a vocational orientation in the for profit sector.

Next, Mr. Jeff Mays, President of the Illinois Business Roundtable (IBR) addressed the Council. IBR represents 63 CEO's of major businesses some with national or global outreach. Mr. Mays is a former legislator and is still active in making legislation in Illinois. Both IBR and Mr. Mays have education, including P-20, as one of their important issues to work on. Mr. Mays was invited as a business leader for a discussion with the Council in order to build bridges between the higher education and business communities and to collaborate. Mr. Mays observed that the business community is focusing on supporting the STEM area. In response to a question about what are the spending reform areas the Roundtable wanted, he mentioned public pensions. He said that we should align public pensions with private sector pensions. He called the move to defined contribution rather than defined benefit, the 2 tier system that is in place, as a move in this direction. He further said that future earnings for current state workers should have lower pension benefits and health benefits. He also suggested school district consolidation and managed care for the Medicaid population. He expects spending reform and no windfall for higher education. Mr. Mays added that even if the state experiences the long term average growth rate of 3.3%, the structural deficit will grow substantially. He expects many jobs to leave Illinois. There was also a discussion on the qualities of a high school education in Illinois and its appropriateness as well as dual credit and cost of remediation to our institutions and the State.

Dr. Peter Kirstein, VP and Chair of Committee A, AAUP Illinois spoke to the group in the afternoon. He discussed AAUP's principles and criteria for promotion and tenure and emphasized academic freedom as essential for higher education. He offered a brief picture of the statewide and national situations relative to promotion and tenure as well as academic freedom and noted a number of what he considers as troubling cases in these areas. He specifically referenced the two recent cases of promotion and tenure denials at DePaul and described the role of AAUP Illinois in helping address these cases. The two cases have received a considerable amount of national attention. It was mentioned that DePaul President has announced that these two cases will be revisited again. A number of DePaul faculty who were denied promotion and tenure in previous years have taken legal action against the university.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM. The next IBHE-FAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday February 15 at the National-Louis University in Chicago. That meeting will include a lunch meeting with the Board and senior IBHE staff.

Submitted respectfully,
Abbas Aminmansour