

Academic Senate Faculty Caucus
May 5, 2004
(Approved)

Call to Order

Senator Crothers called the Faculty Caucus to order.

Approval of Faculty Caucus Minutes:

Motion: By Senator Wylie, seconded by Senator Adams, to approve the April 21, 2004 Faculty Caucus Minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

NCA Accreditation Presentation (Faculty Distinctiveness and Excellence NCA Accreditation Team) Professor Palmer, Education, Administration and Foundations Department:

Our NCA Accreditation Team is one of the special emphasis teams helping to prepare for the self-study report for our NCA accreditation. We will write a draft of the self-study report soon in preparation for the NCA visit in February 2005. The purpose of our group is to look at what the University has called for some time, “faculty distinctiveness and excellence”. Through faculty forums and survey, we are trying to define a process for identifying aspects of faculty distinctiveness and excellence. We are trying to identify the facets of University structure, policies and procedures that facilitate faculty in their work and those that form impediments. Associate Dean of Milner Library Dane Ward is looking at comparative institutions.

In developing the survey, which was sent to all tenure and tenure-track faculty members, we examined each of the mission statements of every department and college and also reviewed *Educating Illinois*. We selected the themes from those documents that were the espoused version of faculty work and asked faculty if policies, procedures and structures have facilitated them to actually meet these stated departmental and collegiate goals.

In our portion of the self-study report, we will address what we do well here, or aspire to do well, and how the policies and procedures help us to achieve this. It would be helpful to hear your opinions about the alignment between policies and procedures and what faculty members aspire to do.

Associate Dean Ward: The survey was broken down into three traditional areas of faculty work—teaching, scholarship and service. “Distinctiveness” is really vague, so we did some benchmarking of other institutions to see how they define that term; and, of course, all universities say their faculty are excellent and distinct. It became clear, when looking at the strategic plans of the universities, that they are emphasizing certain areas, such as research, by the amount of funding for these areas.

Professor Palmer: Almost everyone we have spoken to has articulated the central importance of teaching. Sometimes they have questioned whether or not our policies and procedures facilitate this. Many faculty were of the opinion that, though teaching is highly espoused, greater weight is placed on research when it comes to promotion and tenure.

Senator Borg: In this is a self-study; we are not trying to remedy situations, but rather get to the issues. The kinds of issues that this self-study will bring to light are issues that this body can deal with over the course of the next several years.

Associate Provost Jan Shane: Our NCA self-study is divided into two primary parts. One is looking to the standards for accreditation and asking if we are meeting the standards that make us an accreditable institution and, of course, we are. The other part is the special emphasis projects, which the NCA approved us to take on. This part of the self-study is not so much about problem solving, as much as to start to figure out, over the

course of the next decade, how to move this institution ahead farther as a result of studying these issues.

Senator Wang: There are two types of data that can be collected—subjective and objective. You have gathered subjective data through the use of the survey. Have you collected objective data? For example, what is the objective data for the lack of faculty support for research?

Professor Palmer: We would never present the survey and discussions as scientifically, validated data; we are simply trying to identify areas of university life that we need to look into over time as we try to align the policies and procedures with the work we aspire to do.

Senator Crothers: By objective data, are you also asking, for example, if they have looked at what percentage of departmental operational budgets go to research related activities? Those kinds of things can be benchmarked against other institutions.

Senator Wang: Yes; also, are there other objectives that this report can meet?

Senator Borg: When we developed the plan for the self-study, we extracted the action items in *Educating Illinois 2000-2007* that seemed to have to do with faculty and students and how the University plans. It is the responsibility of the University to see that those goals are accomplished. The framework for this study is to examine and incorporate those goals in our report rather than provide a route to their immediate achievement.

Professor Palmer: This is a formative process. We don't need to prove that we are distinctive or excellent, but the NCA wants to be assured that we collectively know what that means and that we have good processes in place to foster that over time.

Senator Mohammadi: Was the importance of undergraduate versus graduate programs for faculty research and teaching productivity discussed?

Professor Palmer: Some of our faculty colleagues expressed concern that perhaps we did not have the resources to attract top graduate students or develop research agendas that would work into good graduate programming.

Senator Simon: I had trouble with the level of vagueness of this survey. I don't know to which policies and procedures you are referring or how they interfere or help make possible faculty efforts. If we continue in this abstract, subjective mode, this will be a great of effort for nothing. Is there going to be some follow up effort?

Professor Palmer: This is a beginning; this is to provide some indicators of where we have to look for disjuncture between stated aims of faculty work and how the units are structured to facilitate that. We can use this information in future discussions with faculty members so that we can become more specific.

Senator Crothers: By doing this self-study now, are we pledging that in ten years we will have some better answers when the NCA returns?

Associate Provost Shane: In less than ten years, but we needed to turn to the faculty to ask what it is that they feel we are not doing well as a university.

Senator Reid: How do policies make it possible to do what we do? I don't think most faculty have any idea how policies relate to most areas of teaching.

Senator Borg: All of the things that are included in our department mission statements affect what we do.

Senator Reid: You can interpret those things in many ways. You are asking faculty to make a judgment on policies and procedures, which most faculty don't know about specifically. We can say that they ought to know them, but they don't.

Senator Hammel: A comment earlier referred to the emphasis placed on research and that placed on teaching when it comes to promotion and tenure. I would be curious to see how the language about teaching in our ASPT (Appointment, Salary, Promotion and Tenure) documents about teaching compares to the language of our benchmark institutions.

Senator Wang: I think that the term in the survey, "policies and procedures", actually refers to an environment. The benefits of the survey findings are that they are the conceptions of the respondents.

Senator Simon: Perhaps the next stage is to have specific policies and procedures in mind. For example, to question if the annual letter of evaluation adequately reflects strengths and weaknesses and to look at the disjuncture between annual evaluations and tenure decisions. It seems that we could ask more specific questions that would lend a great deal more credence to the self-study.

Professor Palmer: That is exactly where we need to go with this; we need to use this self-study obligation to begin a process that will help us identify specific aspects of the environment that facilitate our work.

Senator Barone: Are you going to produce a report that is going to be circulated; are you going to ask for other kinds of input?

Senator Palmer: We will get a report ready for circulation, but we do want to keep this discussion with faculty going. Whatever we write would be distributed for comment.

Election of Foundation Board Faculty Representative (Term 2004-2007)

Former Senator Joe Armstrong, Department of Biological Sciences, agreed at the end of the spring semester to continue to serve as the Foundation Board Faculty Representative. He would make regular reports to the Senate Chair and report to the full Senate as requested. There were no other nominations; therefore, Professor Armstrong was elected as the faculty representative of the Foundation Board for the term 2004-2007.

Election of Campus Communications Committee Senate Faculty Representative (Term 2004-2006)

Senator Mohammadi was elected by acclamation as the Campus Communications Committee Senate Faculty Representative for the term 2004-2006.

Election of University Anniversary Steering Committee Senate Faculty Representative (Term

2004-2007) There were no nominations for the University Anniversary Steering Committee Senate Faculty Representative. Therefore, the call for nominations was scheduled to take place again in the fall of 2004.

Election of Three Academic Planning Committee Senate Faculty Representatives

The Senate revised the membership of the Academic Planning Committee, in its "Blue Book" (Committee Structure of the Academic Senate) on March 24, 2004, to include three Senate faculty representatives for one-year terms. This was the first election of such representatives and Senator Borg, College of Fine Arts, and Senator Hammel, College of Arts and Sciences, were elected as Senate Faculty Representatives on the Academic Planning Committee for the 2004-2005 term. There were no additional nominations. Therefore, the call for nominations for the remaining vacancy, which must be filled by a faculty member from a college other than Fine Arts or Arts and Sciences, will take place again in fall 2004.

Election of Faculty Liaisons

The following members of the Senate volunteered/were elected to serve as faculty liaisons between the Senate

and their colleges/Milner Library.

CAST: No nominations; call for nominations again in fall 2004.

Milner Library: Senator Wylie

Mennonite College of Nursing: Senator Schlenker

College of Business: Senator Fazel

College of Education: Senator Jerich (nominated and elected)

College of Fine Arts: Senator Hampton

College of Arts and Sciences:

Sciences: Senator Plantholt

Humanities: Senator Reid

Social Sciences: Senator Wang

04.26.04.02 Sense of the Senate Resolution: IBHE-FAC Faculty Productivity Report Endorsement (Faculty Affairs Committee)

The Senate Faculty Affairs Committee submitted the following resolution for Senate endorsement: "After lengthy discussion, the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, along with the Faculty Caucus of the Academic Senate, endorses the Illinois Board of Higher Education Faculty Advisory Council's response to the Illinois Board of Higher Education's request for input regarding faculty productivity issues." The Senate unanimously endorsed the resolution.

Adjournment