

9/8/06 Faculty Senate Retreat

Comprehensive Report

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Abstract

The theme of the Faculty Senate Retreat was “Preparing for Academic Excellence”. Faculty senators were given an opportunity to participate in “break-out” sessions allowing them to discuss items of concern regarding the Retreat’s theme. The culminating event for the retreat was a panel discussion with four members of the Board of Trustees. This report first provides a summary of and the notes generated by “Institutional Impediments and Suggestions for Changes” and “Ready for the World Initiatives” break-out sessions and the Board of Trustees panel discussion.

Summary and Notes Generated by the Institutional Impediments and Suggestions for Changes Break-Out Session

Summary:

This break-out session was concerned with addressing the obstacles preventing the realization of the main theme of the Retreat. The nine obstacles considered were: External Funding, System vs. Campus Policies, Paucity of Large Classrooms, Surge Space, Bike Friendliness, Graduate Student Housing at Laurel Apartments, Relations Between the Faculty Senate and Faculty, Curriculum and External Communications. Suggestions for ameliorating these concerns were offered for each obstacle.

Notes

Attendees: Beauvais Lyons, Andrew Wentzel, John Koontz, Rob Heller, Steve Thomas, Chris Skinner, Mike Clark, David Patterson, Pat Kerschietter, Denise Barlow

Institutional Impediments:

Suggestions for Changes:

1. External Funding

- Office of Research

need for higher staffing,
ombudsperson to troubleshoot
Research Council should be involved

- Recharge Center Salaries and Benefits

VC Barlow is working on this

2. System vs. Campus Policies

Continue to support efforts by the
Chancellor to encourage campus
autonomy.

3. Not Enough Large Classrooms (200+)

Betsey Creekmore involved in
classroom allocation for new
instructional buildings, CARS is and
issue as a first-come-first-serve
system, design for workable, flexible
classroom spaces.

4. Surge Space Needs

Metron Building for non-
instructional purposes

5. Bike Friendly

More bike racks in parking areas,
adjacent to buildings, and bike lanes

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| 6. Graduate Student Housing – Laurel | Mention Concern to VC Rogers
Graduate Council |
| 7. Low Regard for Faculty Senate by Some Faculty | Promoting rewarding Faculty Senate
service in the annual review of
faculty, fostering |
| 8. Curriculum Issues | Coordination between curriculum
changes and staffing and classrooms. |
| 9. External Communications | Even with recent advances, better
process to collect PR good stories
and communicate them more widely. |

Summary and Notes Generated by the Ready for the World Initiatives Break-Out Session

Summary:

This break-out session was concerned with addressing the participants' impressions of the Ready for the World Initiatives. These impressions were in regard to the faculty's lack of knowledge regarding this initiative, the lack of representation of the principles of this initiative at the graduate level and whether the faculty was ready to embrace this initiative.

Notes

I. Faculty really don't know enough about "Ready for the World".

A. It was apparent that among those who attended this session – people there because they were interested in the initiative – that there are a variety of interpretations about it. Most faculty members present didn't fully understand it; many didn't realize it was connected to SACS or that it was the same as the QEP.

B. Most people at the session had not seen the Ready for the World web site, and a number of people in the session didn't even know there was a web site. The administration seems to assume that if "they build it they will come," and is probably working under the assumption that *everyone* has visited the website, when in reality probably very few faculty members have had time to look at it (or don't know it is there).

C. Information about Ready for the World has come to faculty "second hand" (from dept heads, table tents and posters, etc.) and in "bits and pieces," but has never been fully explained to most people. The consensus was there is *awareness* of Ready for the World, but not understanding. For instance, the Library has a Ready for the World Committee, but committee members present said they were still "in the dark."

D. Faculty don't know what is expected of them in implementing the initiative. They don't know who is in charge of the program or whom to contact for information. Is there a role for the Faculty Senate to help disseminate this information? Can the senate facilitate partnerships among departments?

II. The second area of discussion (and concern) was that Ready for the World didn't extend to graduate courses and programs. It was noted that current graduate students need course infusion as much as undergraduates (as they are the professoriate of tomorrow), but that grants don't cover programs for graduate courses.

III. Faculty aren't ready for the world

A. We need sensitivity training in how to handle cultural differences and how to accommodate international students.

B. Many faculty (and some college administrators) don't see the importance of the initiative. How do we get faculty to embrace the initiative and not just see it as a SACS/administrative "requirement." Some people have been told that nothing gets funded unless the dept. matches the grants, so therefore don't bother to seek grant money.

C. We need to be careful not to focus only on Western Europe, Asia, and Hispanic countries, but to include Africa, Indonesia, Russian and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, etc.

Summary and Notes Generated by the Panel Discussion with the Board of Trustees

Summary:

This panel discussion offered the assembled Retreat participants the opportunity to engage with four members of the Board of Trustees. The questions, commentary and concerns offered by the Retreat's participants were in regard to the faculty's ability to help secure additional resources for higher education, faculty, teaching and research assistant compensation, unification of the branding of the University of Tennessee's Main and Agricultural campuses, competitively attracting international faculty and IRIS. The Trustees' responses follow each respective question, commentary and concern.

Notes

The following Trustees were in attendance:

Andrea J. Loughry
James L. Murphy
William B. Stokely, III
Susan R. Williams

Introductions:

Each Trustee was asked by Faculty Senate President Lou Gross to introduce herself or himself and discuss why they served on the Board.

Faculty Question:

With limited resources available to higher education, what can we as faculty do to help?

Trustee Comments:

- Dialogue with legislators, particularly ones from your own district,
- Dialogue with everyday Tennesseans with whom you come in contact, such as your barber; and
- Find new ways to manage resources such as classroom or lab space more efficiently.

Faculty Comments:

- Only 28% of state dollars went to UTK making this campus the lowest allotment in the system. The amount of external dollars raised by UTK faculty averaged \$135,000 per faculty member. UTK average salary plus benefits is less the \$100,000.
- Sub-inflation raises are the compensation problem. Faculty senate supports concept of merit pay but questions merit concept when UTK is 10% behind THEC peers.
- Pay has created a lack of moral the last two years.
- TBR chose to give an across the board 2% pay increase.
- Concern expressed over benefits package, especially no vision and no dental.

Trustee response:

Benefits are part of the state employee system and not under our direction.

The political process is a “contact sport”. Faculty was encouraged to not only communicate with their representatives but to contribute, even a small amount, to gain access.

Faculty concern:

With the Institute of Agriculture and UTK sharing the same campus, will their different missions conflict? Can one branding program handle a diverse system?

Trustee response:

Our system has an overall mission, each institute or campus feeds this system mission. A reminder was given regarding the Sept 19, 2006 first time ever event to bring together employees of the University (each Campus) all at one time (11:00 a.m. EST) to discuss the future of the University, the Strategic Plan and to launch the new branding campaign for the University.

Faculty concerns:

- We are competing on an international field for higher education faculty.
- IRIS—new finance system was not designed at grassroots level; therefore does not meet some grant accounting needs
- Teaching assistants and particularly research assistants are paid less than market price.

Comments made during or after formal session:

- Concern expressed over gender equity, recent list of top paid public servants in Knoxville area showed few females at UTK in top ranks.
- Excitement over the improving abilities of the undergraduate student body as the lottery group moves into their junior year. Smart, involved students are very encouraging for faculty.

Trustee evaluation:

The general spirit of this dialogue was one of mutual respect and support. Faculty understands that we value their position and are working to find additional resources for the university.