

Faculty Senate President's and IFC Report

January 17, 2008

President's Report

Today marks the inaugural meeting of the Faculty Senate (FS). Once again, I need to thank many members of our faculty, administration, and staff plus the folks at UM System for all of their efforts in changing our Bylaws, etc. The FS meeting is at 13:30 today in 204 McNutt Hall.

I have the impression that many faculty members across the campus spend time discussing ethics and plagiarism in their courses. In today's world, it is important to stress these items for students. Many of the norms of my generation are not those of students who regularly engage in group assignments and working in groups. I believe that we should look at solutions to problems in these areas, at least on the departmental level, and maybe have campus support for the development of some common themes to reduce effort duplication.

Many faculty members believe that we have experienced grade inflation over the last few years. Clearly, faculty have the right to assign grades as they see fit, based on their experience and sound academic principles. Whatever our choice is about grading policies, it should be based on a plan that we develop through careful thought and discussion. My thoughts on this have met with responses from "don't touch it" to "we really need to talk about it". Therefore, I will be asking RP&A to look into the grade distribution issues -- Where are we? and Where should we go?

Other items sent to committees, or discussed by RP&A this month included methods to improve faculty advising, reporting dropped students to faculty, emergency preparedness, IT users bill of rights, student complaints of faculty procedures, need for publicizing the campus plan to faculty, and reporting of faculty and administrative salary increases. Academic Freedom and Standards has been asked to review processes related to handling student complaints (see IFC report).

This time of year is also the beginning of the legislative session. I believe our legislators would be willing to hear your views on funding for higher education.

The minutes from the RP&A meeting, which the Officers and many of the Standing Committee Chairs regularly attend, are posted on the Faculty Senate web site. Finally, in the future, we hope to post committee meeting notices on the web with the agenda for the meetings. Virtually all Standing Committee meetings are open, and faculty are welcome to attend. Whether or not non-Committee members are allowed to address the committees is at the discretion of each Committee.

These are interesting times at Missouri S&T.

Frank Blum, President, Faculty Senate

Intercampus Faculty Council (IFC) Report

January 8, 2008

University Hall, Columbia, MO

Student Complaints. One topic of initial discussion was at what level complaints (we primarily discussed those concerning faculty members) should go and at what level should initial attempts at resolution occur. All seemed to agree that, except for special cases such as sexual harassment, that the initial attempts at resolution should normally be made at the department level and then elevated, as appropriate. It was not known whether this is consistent with the procedures on different campuses.

Reporting Financial Misconduct. The financial reporting hot line was discussed in some detail. Some faculty have expressed concerns about the potential for anonymous complaints. Apparently, reports are handled through a third (external) party. UM legal counsel and Human Resources stated that if a complaint was filed against an individual, it would be discussed with that individual and no record would be put in a personnel file if the complaint was unwarranted.

Ethics, Plagiarism, etc. IFC discussed the general need for approaches to educate students on issues of ethics. Many faculty seem to be doing this in their own courses. [It seems to many that we could do this more effectively if we did this training on a broader basis.] One suggestion that was made relative to grade inflation was to list the grade point average for each course with the grade on the transcripts. There were concerns about how complaints are handled on different campuses. It seems that many seem to be submitted and handled at a relatively high level of administration rather than at one closer to the concern.

SB389. There are a large number of reporting requirements associated with SB389. All people who teach (faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, etc.) will have to have their credentials accessible to the general public. Other information will be available only to enrolled students, such as some kind of (yet undetermined) student evaluation.

Governmental Affairs. The Governor proposed a 4.4% increase to the higher education core budget. There is also an additional "Preparing to Care" initiative for health care. Capital requests are being made as well, with MST projects at the top of the list, but funding for them is not certain. In the longer term, the State is not doing too well financially and, by 2010, projections are for a \$200M shortfall.

President Lamb reported that President Forsee will start on February 18. Lamb will continue for the calendar year of 2008.

The campus reports included our concerns about reporting to the fiscal hotline, losing good faculty members, and the effort in reporting on SB 389 (unfunded mandates). UMSL is up for HLC accreditation and faculty have been involved with this effort. They are also reworking their Bylaws. UMC raised concerns about teaching evaluations and the effects of SB 389 and intellectual pluralism. UMKC will have a new Provost in house in mid February. They are also initiating a new budgeting process. [UMKC seems to be much more involved in the budgeting process than we are.]

Frank Blum, President, Faculty Senate
Kurt Kosbar, Past President, Faculty Senate
Doug Carrol, Secretary, Faculty Senate