

**XXXVIII Faculty Senate
President's Report
01/1708**

The most recent Academic Affairs Executive Council meeting was a brunch on December 12th. There were no pressing issues covered beyond concerns about graduation, exams and the storm situation, all of which are now of only historical interest. The next meeting will be January 30th.

The Budget Task Force met with Vice President Kreidler on December 19th. There were many information points presented: the most interesting for the senate I will briefly reprise. News from the State Equalization Board indicates roughly what will happen with higher education in the coming year, and the picture at the time of our meeting was not yet clear: the national picture is not promising for increases in education funding. UCO concerns revolve around the reallocation of funds if new state money is not forthcoming. Undergraduate and graduate applications are both up, and enrollment therefore should not be lower than last year's. UCO student retention remains a concern, but part of the problematic retention number may result from a significant increase in the graduation rate: this is being investigated. It is clear that more students now transfer to UCO than to any other institution in the state. From the budget perspective, the mix of non-resident and resident students continues to be undesirable: the larger the number of state residents, the more class hours that need to be taught with less money. The general economic downturn in the state (and nation) is hitting the students and is leading to slow tuition payments and enrollment problems (I note that a one percent drop in collections is five hundred thousand dollars). There was a very clear presentation of the mechanics of the state funding formula and of how President Webb's efforts to have UCO aligned with a different peer group not only reflects more accurately what we do educationally, but also changes this funding process: we are currently funded at only sixty percent of this aspirational peer group.

The regularly scheduled Executive Committee meeting with President Webb and Provost Radke was held on Tuesday, January 15th, with Provost Radke representing administration: President Webb was unexpectedly, and unavoidably, prevented from attending. The provost noted that the Oklahoma economic projections have been looking, in my terms, grim: the latest information (since the December meeting with Vice President Kreidler) is that there will only be thirty two million dollars of new money to be allocated toward the requirements of all state agencies. This amount may shrink, but even if it does not shrink it is doubtful that higher education is going to get any new money. To add to our concerns, the historical pattern at UCO is that our enrollment rises as the state economy declines, but we do not get new money. The financial situation could be described as shaping up to be 'interesting.' On the brighter side of the meeting, the provost expressed support for the principles underlying the individual faculty development accounts which we will vote on this afternoon: the concept of faculty control of a component of their development money is in itself a step in the 'right direction,' and is more significant than the amount of money specified in the proposal. Merit Pay was discussed and we were told that the remaining component of the task force's recommendations still to be sorted out is longevity / years of service. The projection is that the administration will bring their proposal to the task force, the faculty senate, and the faculty of the colleges during this spring semester: this should result in the finalized version of the plan. Money should be granted under this new mechanism in the fall of 2009. For the fall of 2008, the mechanism will remain as it was for the fall of 2007: an even division of whatever money is available. I asked about whether or not a senior faculty buy-out was being discussed. There is no buyout being considered, but there are many pending retirements, which is a complex issue in itself. I asked about the financial implications of CUPA, because many, many faculty who have spoken to me believe that CUPA has, in an informal expression, 'busted the budget.' We were told that the actual expense has been close to a balance: higher salaries balanced by new hires at lower salaries. Indeed, the extra expense, after hiring eleven new faculty and replacing some, is a cost increase of fifty three thousand, two hundred and ninety three dollars. The provost discussed with us the reorganization of the graduate college, and the establishment of a new, free-standing office of research. This change will result in clearer and, I would say, tidier areas of responsibility.

Lastly, I note Oklahoma House Bill 2493, which will, to quote from the press release, "eliminate all sales tax on college textbooks." With that, I conclude my report.