

President's Report  
March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Since last we met, I have represented the senate at two Academic Affairs Executive Council meetings, at the Faculty Handbook Task Force meetings, and in a meeting with Provost Radke. There have been various other meetings and events, but I shall simply summarize the major ones. I have also received important communications from Vice President Rolfe and decisions from President Webb.

At the Academic Affairs Executive Council meeting of February 27<sup>th</sup>, the focus was on university assessment and academic program reviewing. The background concern, both nationally and locally, is government oversight and the implications of the Spellings Commission: universities will take charge of oversight and assessment or the government will take them over. Hence, national systems are being established. As Vice Provost LaGrow described the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) Report, the methodology is highly regarded and the results considered by the experts to be reliable. UCO's NSSE results were presented, areas of concern identified, and working groups discussed possible remediation techniques. The NSSE work was a logical follow-up on the presentation of NSSE results during the first AAEC meeting of the academic year. There are consistent areas of deficiency, and there are no ways to responsibly neglect them. The remainder of the meeting was centered on a presentation by Dr. Mike Knight on quality benchmarks and program assessment as implemented by UCO's psychology program. The psychology assessment can serve as a model for other programs. I think it is important to add here that Dr. Knight informed us that ETS has developed GRE-ish major field tests, and has produced a computerized writing evaluation test which can take care of evaluating basic writing skills. This writing skills evaluation, if used, may help with remediation.

The AAEC meeting of 12 March was held as an 8:00 to 3:00 retreat at Cole's Gardens. The first part of the day was dedicated to presentations and working group activities centered on transformative learning. The university's commitment to transformative learning is beyond question, and the discussions were enlightening and useful. The second segment of the meeting was a presentation by Vice President Kriedler on the workings of the state funding formula, revenue streams (decidedly not torrents or major rivers), and national funding histories and analyses of the current situation. The history of public funding as presented by Vice President Kriedler accords perfectly with what I heard at the Regents meeting in the fall. In brief, and nationally, state revenue as a proportion of public higher education funding is declining. In Oklahoma, two thirds of the surveyed public do not support spending more money on higher education: this is again in harmony with national trends. Simultaneously, Federal mandates are being defunded and the costs transferred to the states, obviously reducing available money to go to higher education even if there were a desire to increase such funding. We were presented with the funding requirement graphs, the legal restrictions on fund transfers, and the other constraints on our operations. It is, as I have been reporting throughout the year, utterly unpromising if we continue to depend on increases in state money. It isn't going to happen. Nor, as responsible educators, can we raise tuition massively: we would

drive away students who we are supposed to serve, and it isn't a promising long term strategy in any case. Hence, we must as an institution consider new, innovative ways to provide high quality education. New revenue coming from donors is also vital. The Development office has raised that pool of money from approximately eight hundred thousand dollars not many years ago to approximately nineteen million dollars today. This is promising. What remains unpromising is the last bit of this segment of my report. Not only is there likely to be no increase in state funding, but even steady state funding is now in doubt and there is talk of a reduction in funding which would require UCO to return money to the state. This is depressing, I would say.

Parliamentarian Ravikumar and I met with Provost Radke on Friday, March eighth. We discussed the current status of the merit supplement and the senate bills which have been forwarded to administration for responses. The recommendations of the Merit Pay Task Force continue to be largely acceptable in principal, but the funding remains a concern. Vice President Kreidler's office is continuing to evaluate this component of the plan. The length of service issue is most difficult to work out. Hope is still high for getting the system started for fall of 2008 and for funds to be distributed according to the new system in the fall of 2009. There has been no change in the plan for distribution of any available money equally to all faculty as was done this past fall. We discussed the development accounts and ID photos and telephones and faculty parking.

In regard to the ID photos on class lists and digital telephones with caller ID, I have heard from Vice President Rolfe into whose area of concern both proposals fit. The ID photos are already under consideration, and I asked Senator Shukla to be the senate representative on the advisory task force. On the telephones, there is already an awareness that the current campus phone system is in need of major upgrades, and Vice President Rolfe believes the digital phones and the caller ID to be good suggestions which she will take into account when surveying phone vendors. She will send the possible systems and costs to the Faculty Senate for our information and input.

As to the faculty development accounts and the parking possibilities, I have just received formal responses. The funding problems of the university, coupled with the previous increase in per-faculty-person money under the control of the deans and chairs, is seen as fatal to the bill at this time. The parking issue is deferred until the loss of spaces for construction and construction vehicle access has been evaluated.

With this I close my report.