

Report

The Voice of the U.M.K.C. Faculty

September 18, 2001

Note: The Senate meeting centered around logos and cancelled classes. They probably weren't momentous issues, even on campus, but they involved policies that irked people and seemed to reflect centralized and arbitrary decision making. One good thing about fairly small issues is that solutions can often be arrived at easily in discussion. The Provost conceded that these were flawed policies and decisions and said he would discuss them with the Senate or the Senate Executive Committee.

We also had a discussion of gossip and a report on the new campus mediation service. You'll have to read this Report to find out about the gossip discussion :-) but you can get information on the campus mediation program from their Web

University memorial service and cancelled classes

Senators from different units expressed annoyance at the last minute announcement of the cancellation of afternoon classes by the Chancellor. If the administration intended to cancel classes why did it wait until the memorial service to announce it? The problem was compounded by a memo from the Vice Provost's office announcing the class cancellation ahead of time. It was sent to deans and the Chancellor's Cabinet, and was headed by the statement "Please do not announce this memo or circulate it." Why weren't students and professors told classes would be cancelled as soon as the decision was made? Some exams were scheduled, and the unannounced cancellation created a mess. Also, a few students made special trips into campus because they were told classes would be held.

One reason for not announcing the class cancellation was, apparently, a fear that students would leave and not attend the campus service. Several Senators questioned this rationale, asking why it was so important that the numbers attending the service were high. There seemed to be too much concern with appearance, and with what the community might want, and not enough concern for the students. Others thought the decision that the statement had to be made by the Chancellor seemed egotistic.

Some Senators cautioned that this wasn't a routine occurrence. It was an emotional time, and a unique event. Glitches were inevitable. Others broadened the discussion and said that in the last 2 years a significant number of classes had been cancelled, and we should go back to the old policy of not closing the

school unless there was an overwhelming reason. The Provost agreed that the recent class cancellations had been handled poorly, but said there were no objectionable motives. The administration was just feeling its way along on this, and they weren't sure what they were going to do. The decision to cancel classes wasn't made until Friday morning, and it seemed right at the time. He agreed that we should probably have better procedures for closing the university when the weather was bad or tragedy struck, and said he would confer with us on these issues.

Logos

We discussed the use of school/unit logos as supplements to the official UMKC logo. Non-academic units had symbols (like the kangaroo) so why couldn't schools? Specifically, the SBS had a logo that it used on mousepads, seminar announcements and the like. It was a recognized symbol, but they were recently told they couldn't use it anymore. They could only use the official logo. Ballard said he thought we could write a policy that would support the institutional identity and still allow the schools to keep their own logos.

Michael Johnson (the Director of Creative Services) is in charge of logo policy and gave the rationale for the SBS decision. He said a clear university identity was desirable. If the SBS used its own logo that sacrificed the relationship. Many of the individual schools once had their own logos, but they had slowly gone away

Senators questioned the wisdom of the policy. The following motion was proposed and seconded:

In the discussion on the motion one Senator raised the issue of marketing impact, especially when the Chancellor was trying to raise money for the entire university. Senators felt that they did not have enough information on the issue and the motion. That means it will be on the Agenda at the next meeting. In the meantime Senators thought the Executive Committee should discuss this issue with the Provost.

Mediation

A campus mediation program has been started. Its purpose is to get opposing sides in a conflict to talk with each other. Things said in a mediation procedure are confidential and can't be used in a subsequent court case if the mediation fails. The clock didn't stop ticking during mediation, but usually there is a six-month window to appeal decisions, and mediation would take only about three weeks. For more information go to <http://www.umkc.edu/mediation>

Gossip and rumor checking

One senator raised the issue of unsubstantiated rumors that circulated on campus. Should the Senate set up

a hot line or Web Site where the faculty and staff could check the accuracy of rumors?

In the discussion one Senator said that gossip had a social function, and rumors couldn't be stopped. Moreover, who would decide if a rumor was true, partially true, or false? The administration? Often there was a dispute as to the truth of a rumor and, as on the issue of consultation, the administration's interpretation of truth might not be the same as the faculty's. Moreover, the central administration had a near monopoly of official campus communications. That certainly gave them an outlet to refute rumors. Senators thought we should be careful about giving legitimacy to disputed interpretations.

We all agreed that sometimes it would be hard for a faculty member to track down a rumor. Not everyone was willing to write the Chancellor asking whether a hostile rumor was true. :-) We thought Senators should serve that function. If you ask your Senator about a rumor s/he ought to be able to find out if it has any substance.

Capital Campaign project list

The University has embarked on a capital campaign. The goal is to raise \$200 million in donations and endowments for specified projects. (The issue was discussed in the _____ of Sept. 4, 2001.) Senators didn't know the projects on the funding list, and didn't know who/what was benefiting. Additionally, some Senators wanted to know whether it was a closed list. If people had additional ideas for fund-raising projects could they be directly submitted? We didn't know the answer but would try to find out.

The Senate Report of September 4, 2001 was officially approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Harris Mirkin,
Faculty Secretary