

The
U.M.K.C.
Faculty
Senate

Report

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

February 16, 2000

Secretary's note: It was a remarkable change of mood from past meetings. The Incoming Chancellor talked with the Senate and led a series of discussions around issues she had framed (What we liked about the school, our aspirations, and our perception of the problems.) To put it briefly: she came, we talked, she conquered. I think everybody in the room felt good, and hopeful, after the meeting. Wo@

MEETING WITH INCOMING CHANCELLOR GILLILAND

The meeting with the Incoming Chancellor lasted a little over an hour. In the middle she took some time to talk about herself, saying that she was committed to open communication, was direct and didn't put a lot of spin on things. She said that the university was a public institution in which it was important that most information be open. Faculty and administration had largely the same concerns, though administrators also had other groups that they had to work with, and we ought to be able to work together and discuss issues. Of course we wouldn't always agree.

At the beginning of the hour Gilliland asked Senators how they perceived the university, and she was interested in the question of whether the Faculty Senate actually represented the faculty. Of course we claimed that we did, but the question is actually an interesting one. Finally the new Chancellor said she thought it would be useful to have some summer workshops in which issues and plans could be discussed, and answered some questions from Senators.

Why the University is valued by faculty: The discussion started with a question from Gilliland. She wanted to know what people loved about this place, and why they had decided to spend their careers here. The question both set a positive tone and elicited some interesting answers. Of course everybody valued faculty colleagues. Many talked about the appeal of various interdisciplinary programs, the possibilities for experimentation, and the richness of the interaction with the urban area. Others thought

the teaching atmosphere was good. There were some unique programs. The university respected academic freedom, encouraged diversity and didn't place restrictions on innovations and research. Several mentioned the students and said that many were exceedingly bright, and liked the fact that they came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Several other things got special mention: librarians are considered faculty and that allows for some special opportunities, the Senate welcomed the Engineering Program even though it was still formally assigned to a different campus, the program in telecommunications was unique and innovative, the debate program was outstanding and there were interesting possibilities for bringing high school and even elementary school students into the fold, the value of a state supported pharmacy school, and the unique characteristics of some of the deans.

At the end of the discussion Gilliland noted that people seemed to value the size of the university, the possibilities for interdisciplinary work, its urban environment and its diversity. She said that though the administration had many roles she thought administrators should usually serve as helpers rather than as bosses. One of the most important administrative roles was to minister to the needs of students and faculty and to facilitate their work.

Representative role of the Senate: Can it be assumed that the Senate actually does represent faculty, or do we just speak for ourselves? Do we bring forward faculty concerns? Do we take back to faculty information on the issues discussed? Are there other avenues of communication with the faculty?

Senators said they were elected by faculty in their units and were accessible to colleagues. Many gave formal reports at faculty meetings. The written Report of the Senate meetings is circulated and seems to be widely read, though placement on the web has been sporadic. There were some highly formalized mechanisms for faculty feedback, like the evaluations of Deans and Directors which were administered by the Senate, though these only worked if they were taken seriously by the administration. The Senate was also talking about an Information Technology (IT) committee structure that would allow for adequate representation of faculty views [see below].

There were some problems in faculty/administrative communication. Deans didn't always share crucial information from Deans' meetings with their faculties. There were two parallel lines of communication, one coming from the Deans, going through the chairs, and a second through the Senate. Sometimes crucial information got lost in the cracks. A second problem was that sometimes the Senate and faculty didn't have adequate information to usefully discuss an issue. If an administrator had struggled with an issue for a long time and then just distributed information to the Senate when they appeared before it, the Senate didn't know enough to give decent advice or to have an informed response. Senate committees (like the Senate Budget Committee) had to be involved in

the decision making process, so that they could share information with the Senate, if we were to be of value in the process. It would also help to distribute information to Senators before the meetings, so that we had time to read it. The Incoming Chancellor seemed amenable to these suggestions and asked for a list of Senate committees.

The Incoming Chancellor's comments: Gilliland said that she wanted the faculty and administration to work together. She asked if people would be available for retreats during the summer. She wasn't formally coming here until April and didn't want to wait until September to start a communication process. (Most Senators indicated that they would be available.) There were lots of plans for the future around, and it was important to sort through them and set a direction for the school. She also intended to continue the tradition of coming to Senate meetings at least once a month. She would send a representative if she could not attend.

In answer to a question the Incoming Chancellor said that she wanted a Provost model of administration (e.g. one with a chief academic officer). She was thinking about how to appoint a permanent person, and would not do that without a national search. When asked about reallocations of VERIP money, the Incoming Chancellor said that no plans had yet been made, and decisions about this obviously involved decisions about the future direction of the university. She wanted to discuss this issue at the summer retreats. The incoming Chancellor also said that the creation of new programs didn't automatically mean new administrators were hired. Positions had to be reallocated, and if we were to do something new we could often stop something that we had been doing.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

There was an extended discussion about how to assure that faculty voices are heard within the new IT structure. We thought it was important that members of the faculty committees know enough about the issues to be able to participate usefully in discussions and decision making, but the concerns of faculty not terribly interested in IT issues also needed to be heard. Finally, there were general issues that affected all faculty members, and there were the unique needs of each unit. Both had to be addressed, and the university had to build towards the future at the same time as it satisfied present needs.

A proposed structure in which the Senate would encourage each unit to have an elected computer committee, and in which each of these elected committees would elect one person to sit on a central computer committee that would meet regularly with Craig Klimczak (CIO) was discussed. The Senate Chair would also sit on this committee. The central committee would select the faculty to sit on the proposed coordinating IT Advisory Council. [This Council would advise on faculty and administrative computing policies and other information technology issues.] We thought the proposed structure

would work, but put off any formal resolution until a representative of the Senate could discuss the issue with Klimczak.

OTHER ISSUES

The UMKC policy documents on post-tenure review, mentioned in Dean Durig's letter to the last Report were known to the post-tenure review committee and had previously been distributed to members.... The Senate passed a resolution supporting the addition of a UM faculty member to the UM Board of Curators:

Resolved: The UMKC Faculty Senate endorses the seating of faculty on governing boards of universities. Therefore, we urge our elected representatives to support HB 1475 and SB 796 or SB 825.

The Senate needs to nominate members of a variety of administrative committees. The standing Administrative Affairs committee will make recommendations to the Senate.... The Elections Committee gave a brief report. At this point there has not been an overwhelming number of nominations. The committee noted that service as a Senate officer takes an enormous amount of time, and the service is not rewarded. They thought it might be wise to seek released time or other rewards to make service as a Senate officer more appealing.... The IFC had not yet met, but this campus' representatives were going to support campus autonomy in setting the academic calendar.... Some Senators thought that the last Report was too critical of the Provost. After a short discussion the Report was overwhelmingly approved.

Respectfully submitted,

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Faculty Secretary