Senate meeting with Benno Schmidt, 28 April 2005

Schmidt chair of BRTF, although “not hierarchical”

In attendance:
Benno Schmidt, Larry Jacob, Jacob Waterborg, Sandy Joy, Tony Luppino, Ed Hood, Philip Crossland, Ed Gogol, Karen Bame, Dick Murphy, David Atkinson, LGG, Gary Ebersole, Bruce Bubacz, Steven Driever, Steven Neau, Osborne, Alfred Esser, Jerry Knopp

Bubacz: UMKC’s been studied to death – what can your TF do that hasn’t been done before?

Schmidt wants senate to help pull together all reports to cover all schools

Bubacz asks about privatization and joint projects

Schmidt – far from an expert on higher ed in Missouri, has been looking at it of late. Picture for UMKC at state level is not an encouraging one as far as public funding for initiatives Danforth report recommended. Recurring costs were $18 million plus, building/maint. Costs $12 million plus. If public funding isn’t available for new initiatives, $ would have to come from philanthropic resources. Some folks see that as a type of privatization. Sometimes philanthropic organization then becomes more involved in the life/mechanisms of the university.

Gogol: The letter circulated by Jacobs says that certain areas would be excluded – administration, direction of certain academic units. What IS the scope of this study?

Schmidt – have no outline, no template, not here to evaluate particular programs or faculty members, but here to make strategic characterizations that reflect some assessment of the program. Example: some people in the reports he’s read and other things he’s read and people he’s talked to that it would be in the best interest of the KC community in the broadest/most inclusive/regional sense for KC to be the home of a first-class broad research university. If one were to agree with that premise, then the question would be if KC has such an insitution now. If one were to decide that’s a strategic objective, then one would have to assess some broad strategic plan, recommendations about how one would build on what’s here. Would have to make an assessment for example, if the Danforth report would be accepted – build a strong research capacity, grad programs in the life sciences. What exists now? Not how can we improve a specific program. If anything can be added, people on the TF have applicable experience in similar areas.

What would be the other areas? A gradual process over time, but one would probably focus on certain areas rather than having a strategy to do everything at once? Life sciences? Music? Humanities? Would have to look at all of those?
Jacobs: Government reform commission, KC felt it was important to look at all of this with an outside perspective, what will the public not do in forthcoming years, forces timeline. Aware of time pressures, aware of chancellor’s search going on. Also involving other universities in town, and KU.

Schmidt: Timing is helpful in suggesting questions that may be interesting. Understanding is that other philanthropic things happening in KC. Stowers Institute, major strategic venture between KU-MC and Stowers plus MO. Hospitals, presence of Stowers would cause any university in the country to raise questions about what that means for our own work in those fields, major drive for the museum – is that relevant or collaborations. Other universities to learn broad lessons from – UC San Diego, California system has figured out world-class programs at more than the flagship campus without harming the flagship campus, CUNY system – Schmidt chairs the board, trying a number of things there in collaboration with the K-12 system and in collaboration with other universities in the area, mostly private; how should one think of the role of a great public university now versus 50 years ago? Michigan, Penn State interesting examples.

Relationships with KC MO public school system, performing arts, visual arts, reality of KC is split b/w two states, KU med center – does this have relevance to what we do or plan to do, possible greater cooperation? Is system governance of UM system one that is optimal for the development that would be in the best interest of Kansas City to develop a broad first-class research university?

Ebersole—to what extent are you and the members of your TF aware of governance issues? We’re interested in the impetus for this? Do see the board of trustees for UMKC quite involved, but don’t see faculty and administration of UMKC involved. We’re troubled by the level of involvement by these trustees.

Schmidt – aware of all that. Their involvement will be to give us ideas, no commissioned by them, but commissioned by the greater KC trust foundation, represents the broad philanthropic base of KC. Report on higher ed in greater KC from a broad perspective.

Bubacz: have you been asked to consider severing UMKC from the UM system and be a free-standing university?

Schmidt – not been suggested, but have heard from some people that a question we should look at is whether the governance system looks at UMKC as an instrument of the state but as an intergal part of the greater KC civic enterprise. There are some other government’s ideas you see across the country. If the KC community does not feel invested in UMKC, if the philanthropic community does not think the governance structure gives the community enough influence in KC, then …? The question is coming up in other states as well.

Bubacz: then the question also should be raised should the philanthropic community be involved in running/influencing the university?
Hood: lack of liaisons to UMKC trustees, thinks business community needs to know what happened with no confidence votes, forced consensus, we want to move this city forward, problem is the methodology with which it’s approached. Concerned that the TF is a way to force another consensus.

Schmidt – things his comment is actually consistent with the questions were just talking about regarding the system of governance. Just described a system in which the academic element of UMKC was not communicated. But may have to do with system governance elements. Breakdown/absence of communication with business/philanthropic community.

Luppino: mentions 811 grand incidents. Played out in the media. Wants to suggest to meet with representatives of two groups together. More importantly, a dialog needs to happen between business community and faculty.

Schmidt – would be worthwhile to be more systematic communication around issues. Seems to be an obvious way to develop. Doesn’t think the philanthropic community has supported UMKC. Doesn’t know why but cannot be all their “fault.” Why is that?

Driever: Has to do with development/advancement. Why do you think you were chosen to chair this tf?

Schmidt- should ask the people who chose me. Done a lot of work at urban universities at CUNY, experience at two other private research universities. Didn’t raise that question.

Driever – who chose the members?

Schmidt – suggested to the KC community group. Don’t know a couple of the folks.

Duderstadt – nuclear physicist, grew up close to here
Atkinson – architect of UC system (?!!??), UCSD, people who worked with him have a high respect for academic wisdom, understanding of the system and architecture, look at progress the UC system schools have made, UMKC should be mindful of the history and aspirations of UM Columbia
Schmoke-relationships between higher ed and urban development, urban school system, senior trustee at Yale for years, urband development understanding is interesting, heard it said there’s a sense of separation with the KC communities – similar issues in B’more Tucker – urban education, access to higher ed issues, workforce development issues, relationships between universities and urban development,
Womack – public higher ed finance, CFO at UNC-CH and U Michigan
Linquist – molecular biologist at MIT, on science advisory board of Stowers

Driever – interesting that you know most of these folks? Do you think the diversity is broad enough?
Schmidt – think it’s a pretty good committee.

Driever – who will write the report?

Schmidt – will put it together

Gogol – will we be able to see a draft of the report?

Schmidt – will see

Driever – how do you feel about August deadline and summer lack of population

Schmidt – feel hurried and harried, thinks necessary because of the governor’s government reform packages

Esser—will you ask the newspaper to have a poll to gauge the community’s sense of UMKC? Based on how you do this assessment, influences the report. Asked if report will be presented to trustees. Ask the question why is the philanthropic so stingy with UMKC? Urge to look into it – give endowed chairs but keep money in their own coffers. Other aspect – when Stowers was created in parallel a for-profit group called the Valley Corp.— ask for their business plan. Schools were asked to give up all intellectual property rights in that area (past, current, future) for $1 million to each school. How do you balance who you’ll ask to make a recommendation to the governing board to this university as well as the governor?

Schmidt – findings will be presented to the Curators. Will ask lots of folks and ask for their perspectives. Willing to challenge everyone.

Hood: is the money enough?

Jacob: Don’t know how much it’ll be at the end of the day, have other foundation support, have put in staff, etc.

Hood-- what’s your motivation to do this with a limited amount of $$ for your time? Why are we allowing a government reform commission to force this? Valid question. Who is pushing this agenda?

Jacob – community foundation and board (including Kauffman foundation) moving this. Want to support this university and other universities in this area. People are saying KU is the urban university. Looking at state government, no anticipating any growth.

Jacob – people they’re meeting with go beyond business interests, include urban core community, workforce/job training development

Schmidt – would like names for folks to talk to
Bubacz – if the report has specific recommendations, and the government reform commission thinks the ideas have merit, they won’t but it aside.

Schmidt – if the system architecture tends towards a sense of separation from the system, then one would want to recommend changes – other places have figured out how to keep the system and still make local connections/changes. At some point you need to ask if you can have a better approach?

Driever – locally many of our faculty connect with the community.

Schmidt – sure that faculty do connect with the community, but hears the message of the sense of separation or the lack of rootedness in the KC community.

Esser – if this is systemic problem, should also be a problem with UMSL, UMR. Maybe a problem here because we don’t have Wash U. Think Schmidt should look at that because we don’t have Wash U?

Hood – can tell Schmidt that this faculty is glad that we had the system governance in place with the event so last fall. Hearing comments because of a split between business community, UMKC trustees and UMKC.

The resolution – most serious issue is that the study is rushed and that we’re in a chancellor’s search now. Better to continue the study and not be under a forced agenda. Chair of the reform commission is on board of trustees. Concerned about having a proper study. Ask for response to Senate resolution.

Schmidt – is there a time to do a thorough enough job – first question may be right – thinks there is enough time.

Will this interfere with the Chancellor search? Doesn’t think it’ll affect it, if he were coming into a new job, would be grateful for the reports.

LGG – asked about science heavy TF – what about arts? And lists of community involvement/engagement compiled under MG – should get that – concerned that UMKC has not well publicized community involvement/engagement

Crossland – asked about meeting with UMKC board of trustees and BRTF – is an open meeting

Ebersole – should not be naïve in taking any recommendation to a government commission without understanding agendas operating at that high level

Unfortunately conflation of anti-intellectualism with evangelicalism – no new taxes, creates a dangerous situation for funding public education from K-higher ed.
$60 million for central system funding includes MOBIUS, etc. – don’t take that $60 million figure at face value

Schmidt – political reality is not likely to be a fundamental new context in which we should think about our future

Hood – if he got some funding to broaden the committee, would you?

Jacob – funding isn’t the issue – do you have names of people with a broader perspective?

Schmidt doesn’t agree with the premise. Believes the people on the committee are broad in their experience. Doesn’t believe should have a large number of people involved in this.

Jacob – had opened the door to bring on specific folks who could add value to the TF. Broadening at this time would be unwieldy.

Esser – would you be willing to fund a committee later to look further after these recommendations are delivered?

Jacob – don’t know – sounds like you won’t agree with these recommendations.