

The
U.M.K.C.
Faculty
Senate

Report

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

February 6, 2001

Faculty-Dean Conflict in Education School

Faculty claims dean appoints chairs they unanimously rejected. Dean argues she has legal power to do so.

Discussion of meaning of “consultation.”

Faculty governance role & Chancellor’s cooperative model supported. Senate suggests it appoint fact-finding committee.

Resolved: The Faculty Senate regards the meaningful input and guidance of faculty in hiring decisions for faculty positions, and respect for university rules, to be of the highest importance. Accordingly, the Faculty Senate urges the School of Education to suspend its current chair hiring process until meaningful faculty input and consent is achieved.

Several members of the Education School faculty, and the AAUP executive committee, spoke with the Senate to ask for guidance and support. The Education School was involved in a search for new chairs, and the speakers said their dean had violated both the letter and the spirit of the university’s rules.

Though the division that was protesting was dissatisfied with all the candidates, the greatest opposition was to the candidate the dean seemed to be negotiating with. The faculty in the division (by a vote of 13 to 0, with one abstention) believed the search needed to be reopened. It was alleged that the dean ignored their unanimous rejection of her favorite candidate and their vote to reopen the search. They charged that the dean filibustered during their meeting with her, and didn’t allow faculty members to speak or vote. That violated the procedure established in previous searches. A member of the search committee had gathered the views of the faculty as soon as they could speak with people on campuses from which candidates came, but the dean then claimed the information was not given to her in a timely manner.

The faculty members believed that the dean had her mind made up before their meeting, and that her

meeting with them was a sham consultation that only followed the form of consultation but violated its substance. The dean claimed that she had checked out all the faculty's concerns herself, and was satisfied that the concerns were invalid. The glowing reports that she apparently received were contradicted by numerous negative reports given to faculty. The dean's position that she had checked out all the faculty concerns and found them baseless seemed arrogant, among other things.

There was some discussion about whether the dean had the legal power to act as she was doing. She claimed that under university rules deans had the power to appoint chairs, while the faculty argued school bylaws made it a joint responsibility of dean and division. Additionally, faculty argued, the chair had to be a faculty member first and the faculty could reject that and could refuse a tenure track position. At the end, the legalities seemed somewhat peripheral. Even if the dean had the power it shouldn't be exercised in this way, and her administrative approach seemed to conflict with the leadership theory embedded in the BluePrint process. Additionally, the dean had little legitimacy, since she had been forced on the faculty, without a search and with coerced consent, by the Lamb/Smelstor administration.

Senators asked how the faculty got put into a position in which it rejected all the candidates. Apparently the choice of who came in was not made by the faculty, but by the dean and a commercial search firm. Faculty didn't even see the original references-- they were provided with summaries. The dean, not the faculty, had chaired the search process. The faculty search committee did not have the opportunity to vote or make recommendations on the candidates or to approve the procedures.

Senators discussed what the Faculty Senate could & should do. There was agreement that the Senate should support the importance of faculty governance, and the resolution on the previous page of the *Report* was passed with one abstention. Additionally the Senate thought it would be valuable to appoint a fact-finding committee, of outstanding faculty members from outside the Education School, to do an investigation and make a report on what had happened. The report should go to the Provost and/or the Chancellor as well as the Senate. Interim Provost Bill Eddy had been sitting in on the meeting. He seemed interested in a fact-finding committee, but of course he was generally non-committal. He said that he would need to meet with both the dean and the committee before commenting on the issue or making any decision. At the end of the discussion one wag remarked that at least the dean had brought the faculty together.

BluePrint process discussed; Retreat set

Some Senators expressed increasing concern about the BluePrint process while others strongly defended it. Concern centered around the setting of priorities-- many new programs were being discussed, and these would take money away from current understaffed and under-funded programs (at least in a world of finite resources). For example, we are talking about state of the art classrooms, but might not have faculty to teach in those classes. Additionally, some argued that large spending proposals had been approved without adequate consultation, while other things (like the distribution of VERIP \$\$) seemed to be on infinite hold.

ALA Intellectual Freedom Principles statement endorsed

The Faculty Senate voted to endorse the Assoc. of College and Research Libraries' statement on intellectual freedom. It states that library records should be confidential, that collections should be free of political censorship and that open and unfiltered access to the web should be available. The complete statement is available in a nice format at <<http://ala.org/acrl/principles.html>>

Defenders of the process said that much of the anxiety came from people who had not participated in it, and that the basic philosophy is to establish new standards, recognizing that this takes a great deal of money. They argued it is incorrect to say that the BluePrint is not considering existing programs, and said there would be ample opportunity to set priorities.

Thus, some Senators saw chaos while others saw a creative ferment. There was agreement that the Senate needed to be aware of the issues and had an important coordinating role to play. After bandying arguments back and forth the Senate decided we should have a one day April retreat on the BluePrint process. We would focus on coordination of the various plans, on the turf battles, and on reorganization of the university's administrative structure. Priorities need to be set and the Senate, as the primary elected faculty organization, should play an important role in that process. A retreat planning group was formed: Quinton Bowles (Engineering), Harris Mirkin (PolSci), Kathleen Schweitzer (Library and Chair), Wendy Sistrunk (Library), and Ellen Suni (Law). Contact the committee, or your Senators, with issues, ideas and concerns.

Pat Long, V. C. of Student Affairs, talks with Senate

Committee to Evaluate Bill Scott, Interim VC for Administrative Services formed.

Everybody seems to be pleased with the job that Scott has been doing, and the Chancellor thought it might not be necessary to do a national search. The Senate and Chancellor agreed that it was at least necessary to do a thorough examination of his performance, and a committee to do this will be formed.

The new Vice Chancellor said her job was to support professors, keep the record system functioning, recruit students and provide adequately for counseling and other student needs. She didn't want a hierarchical office, and so didn't fill the position of Associate Vice Chancellor, but she did promote Deb Lewis to Assistant Vice Chancellor. She sought more faculty involvement in many aspects of the office.

There was a discussion of recruitment since goals seem, sometimes, to be set on the basis of magical incantations. Had market studies been done? Long said that she agreed with the criticism, and that by May we should have a good report and realistic goals.

Computing to be discussed, phone resolution passed

There have been several complaints about actions of CIO Klimczak, in which he appeared to arbitrarily dismiss rules that were already in place, change funding, and make new policies without adequate consultation. Senators will investigate the issues and report at the next meeting. Contact your Senator if you have information... The telephone company plans to remove some payphones, since the ubiquitous cell phones mean they earn less than \$100 a month. Senators thought that there were some concerns of safety and passed a resolution stating that the Administrative Affairs office should consult with the Student Affairs office and the BluePrint process in deciding what phones should be removed.

Respectfully submitted,

Harris Mirkin, Faculty Secretary