

**The
UMKC
Faculty
Senate**

Report

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

Sept. 17, 2002

Meeting with the Chancellor: Issues of Governance

During most of the Senate meeting we discussed the issue of faculty participation in decision making (faculty governance). The Chancellor said she “loved faculty” and got tired of faculty and administration bad mouthing each other. If we were to have a great university both had to work together. Senators agreed with that, of course. The question was how to structure the relationship.

The Chancellor said she had worked closely with the Senate Executive Committee, and would like to work with a budget committee when we get it organized. She intended to meet with the Senate more regularly, She would try to discuss issues before decisions were made, so the Senate could do more than simply react, and would disseminate information before the Senate meetings

The discussion turned to the Cabinet and the Extended Cabinet, since these seemed to be an important part of the campus governing structure. The Chancellor said the Cabinet had been formed out of the old Academic Council which was primarily an administrative body. The Vice Chancellors, some deans, and some administrators that reported directly to the Vice Chancellors were in the Cabinet. The Chair of the Senate was added to the Cabinet this year and was the only direct representative of a faculty group. Prof. Skidmore (Political Science) was also in the Cabinet, but he was there because of his role in BluePrint.

The Chancellor said the advice of the Cabinet was valuable, but Senators said that, though the Cabinet often purported to speak for the university (as in their recent SBS resolution), it didn't have significant faculty representation. Some Senators argued that the administrators who were in the Cabinet served largely at the pleasure of the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, and would be very cautious about disagreeing with their bosses. Therefore, they speculated, if the Chancellor were relying on this group for information she probably would not get good advice. Moreover, the Cabinet was not conveying information back to the units, if that was what it was supposed to do. The Chancellor agreed that this was a problem.

In the grand scheme of things the Chancellor expects the Extended Cabinet to be a conduit for input outside of the administrative lines represented by the Cabinet, and she said it had been extremely helpful. Senators doubted that the Extended Cabinet was an adequate vehicle for the expression of faculty perspectives. Members were self-nominated or appointed by the administration. A few were elected by various groups. The structure of the discussions didn't always allow disagreement, and faculty was only a small portion of the membership.

Some Senators argued that the Senate was belaboring the issue. The Cabinet was an administrative, not

an academic, group and it didn't claim to speak for faculty. Others asked why, then, did it pass a resolution about academic issues in SBS? Would the Chancellor renounce the resolution? The Chancellor said she gets resolutions from many groups, and doesn't normally comment on them.

The discussion ended with a general feeling that we should continue to explore the various issues involved in faculty governance, and the institutions needed to further it. The planned All-Faculty meeting was one step in getting direct faculty input on issues. The Chancellor said that her goal was open discussion. She wanted debate and didn't think that she had a corner on the truth. She argued that, despite current problems, the university has a big opportunity in the future. The City is increasingly aware that the university is an asset that it needs, and the university has more visibility than it used to have. She thought there was a buzz about the university that didn't exist before, and that UMKC was viewed as a place where things were happening.

Strategic plan

The first part of the meeting with the Chancellor was spent discussing a draft of the Strategic Plan which had been submitted to the Senate. Gilliland sought feedback on the Plan, which was to be submitted to the General Officers and then the Curators. She said it was both a documentation of what had happened and a celebration of accomplishments.

Senators commented that the plan did not give enough attention to the educational mission of the university. They also thought the report was too upbeat. This had not been a great time for the university, and the impact of the budget cuts, for example, needed to be discussed. There were numerous comments on style and on specific points. The Chancellor and Jennifer Spielvogel (who is drafting the report) said that they found the comments helpful. The Chancellor said that the final draft would acknowledge the problems as well as celebrating our accomplishments, and should help to define the relationship of the various units to the university.

Resolution deploring Cabinet resolution on SBS & other issues

After the Chancellor left there was some discussion of a resolution deploring the Cabinet's resolution on SBS. There was a feeling that the faculty should give voice to their belief that the resolution was inappropriate. The overwhelming majority of the Senate, though, felt that there was no point in going back to the resolution, even if it were a poor one. It had been deplored and attacked in a number of venues, and it was time to move on.... The Curators had passed a broad resolution allowing them to release faculty in case of financial emergencies. This seemed to go against tenure, but the President and Vice President said that it wasn't the intent of the Curators or of the administration. The President proposed to clarify the meaning of the resolution, but the Senate thought that was not sufficient, and that the Curators should redraft their resolution. The IFC will discuss this issue with the President.

Respectfully submitted,

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Faculty Secretary