

## **THE UMKC FACULTY SENATE**

# **REPORT**

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Date: April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004

*Note: This was last regular Senate meeting of the year, though there might be some meetings during the summer if circumstances warrant them. This meeting was chock full of important and contentious issues. There was a discussion of the Blackboard/WebCT controversy, a report and short discussion on the advisability of moving the Law School downtown, and a discussion with the Chancellor about the consultant costs paid by the university. There were also resolutions passed on the use of the student computer fee and on faculty leave policies when unit funds weren't available to cover extended illness, injury or maternity/paternity leaves.*

## **CONSULTING FEES, CONSULTING FEE CATEGORIES, AND TRUST**

Since the days of Gordon Starr Breakthrough Projects there have been questions about the money the university was spending on outside consultants, and at its April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting the Senate had asked the Chancellor for information on this issue. Subsequently the *Kansas City Star* also requested information. The Senate Executive Committee met with the Chancellor to discuss the *Star* and Senate requests on April 12<sup>th</sup>. The Chancellor prepared a report for the Senate at this meeting and subsequently Vice Chancellor Gates supplied supplemental information.

The Chancellor opened her comments, both with the Executive Committee and with the Senate, with a brief statement that she needed advice on how to communicate better with the university staff and faculty. She said the people in an organization need to trust each other if the organization is to move ahead, and that she has never had any intention of covering things up. The entire executive team feels this way also, and their general willingness to be open was central in the hiring process. [Senators said that faculty needed to be consulted before decisions were made, not informed about policies after they were adopted. Some also said that in public meetings the Chancellor often appears to be averse to hearing criticism.]

On the issue of consultants, Gilliland argued that we should not put all of them into one basket. We hire them in different ways for different purposes.

- **Outsourcing for areas in which we do not have expertise.** An example would be the hiring of an architect (their fee is included in the cost of a building), a person to do

an audit of an area, or of people who do the initial (silent) inquiries about fund raising campaigns. The campus Master Plan also used outside consultants.

- **Temporary employees.** It is sometimes cost-effective to hire temporary employees as paid consultants, since then the university does not have to pay benefits and go through a complicated paperwork procedure. A good example of this was Steve Cohen, hired to temporarily replace Augie Mendoza as Affirmative Action officer. The school needed someone in that position for legal reasons, and Cohen came in on the regular allocation of the office. He didn't need benefits, so while his salary might have looked higher than the regular one, there were no invisible benefit costs. This strategy has been used at other times too. Frank Horton's independent contractor consulting fee as Interim Dean of SBS didn't involve benefits, and was paid for by the vacant dean's line. In answer to a question, the Chancellor said that the lack of benefits reduced consulting fees, but conceded that sometimes fees sound high because they are high.
- **People and organizational Development costs.** These include sending staff members to workshops and short courses as well as giving faculty sabbaticals. They are the biggest chunk of money in the consultant/staff development area. Organizational development costs include the 2000/2001 Breakthrough project. The Chancellor said this was mostly privately funded, though the university subsequently added some funds.<sup>1</sup> The formal project ended in 2001, though since then one of the consultants has been here for individual projects, like team building, or resolving conflicts. Sometimes these have involved the executive staff, and often individual departments requested them. These visits were outside the initial contract, and were paid for by the unit's budget or private funds. On occasion, some general operating money was used.
- **Special projects.** These projects have more discretion in hiring than the "outsourcing for areas in which we do not have expertise" category. Thus, Frank Horton was hired by the Provost to chair the Resources For Our Vision (Viability) Committee. He was paid from the Provost's budget. He was also to review the Institute for Urban Education, and was paid for by the grant that funded the project. [Larry Gates added that Rita Valenciano has been hired to work with the City's Hispanic community.]

The Chancellor said that the university is spending less in the administrative area than it was four years ago. There are fewer people, but they are being paid more and have higher-level titles. This was a conscious policy. There was a question about whether the central administration had reduced costs and staff by simply delegating central administration tasks to the various units. The Chancellor did not think that this had happened, but she wasn't sure. Another Senator noted that the administration often tended to hire outside consultants when there was adequate talent on campus to do the job. She promised to look at that issue and be sensitive to it.

## THE LAW SCHOOL & 811 GRAND

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<sup>1</sup> Gilliland said that the Breakthrough projects cost \$2.5 million, of which \$750,000 was for consultants. The consultant's fees were from a private grant. The rest of the money was for discrete projects, like the design of the new residence hall. The Diversity in Action group has used some funds to hire facilitators for their workshops.

There has been some concern that the Law School would be forced to move downtown, but the Chancellor said that she simply wanted to explore the issue. 811 Grand is the old Federal Courthouse, and there is an attempt to breathe life into that part of downtown. Some local developers were hired to develop projects, and one possibility was that an educational unit should be placed there. Since the lawyers and courts are downtown, the law school was a possibility. The Chancellor hoped that there would be considerable funds for such a move, since money has been used to entice other organizations downtown, but there have been no firm developments in this area. Other universities and cities had downtown law schools, and the Chancellor thought we ought to explore the possibilities and contact some of the schools. The developer was connected with the UKC Board of Trustees, but the Chancellor denied that this was a consideration. [An article in the Kansas City Star had implied that there was a connection.]

The law school does not seem to support the move. It is integrated with other units on campus, so moving the school downtown might not make educational sense. Moreover, there were questions about safety and accessibility. Some of the advantages (like being near the downtown law firms) seemed minimal. A task force was created to study the issues, and it reached the tentative conclusion that a move down to 811 Grand would not be in the interests of the law school and the university. The committee emphasized that this conclusion is "qualified by references to additional information and considerations" that might be relevant to an ultimate decision. It therefore had not made a final recommendation. It will seek views from other UMKC units before doing so.

## **BLACKBOARD V. WEBCT**

Paul Cuddy (Medical School) gave a report for the committee that was charged with deciding on whether the university would go with either Blackboard or WebCT. In October there was a push for the university to go with only one platform, to save licensing and support costs. Faculty, students and IS staff were represented on the committee. People were passionate about the platform that they liked (generally the one that they used). Both platforms were acceptable, and neither was clearly superior. [See the Senate website at <http://sbs.umkc.edu/fsenate/files/X040420e.pdf> and <http://sbs.umkc.edu/fsenate/files/X040420d.pdf> for a comparison of features and shortcoming of each platform.] At the end the faculty gave a split decision. Dividing lines tended to be along the platform used. [Apparently the division on platform use wasn't along discipline lines, though some schools dominantly used one or the other platform. Those who started early tended to use WebCT, while others were more likely to use Blackboard.] The committee wanted to keep the votes of individual members secret.

Some Senators wondered why both platforms couldn't be supported, since there would be a time and learning curve cost in switching. The license fee wasn't that expensive (\$30,000 and \$50,000), and one person could give routine support for both platforms. (*Note: In a later discussion I was told that the huge majority of help calls simply involved lost passwords.*) To some Senators it seemed as though academic decisions and costs were being too heavily influenced by administrative convenience. Additionally, if we went exclusively with one platform, that platform could raise licensing costs later on. Cuddy said that he would discuss these issues with the committee, but said that most campuses went with only one platform. In the meantime, everyone agreed that if there were a switch, support would be essential. There were

filters to help in transferring courses from one to the other platform, but they were not perfect.

## **STUDENT COMPUTER FEE RESOLUTION**

Apparently much of the Student Computer Fee is being spent on PeopleSoft and other university-wide projects. That was not the intention of the fee. There were pressing student needs on-campus, especially to make on-line databases more available. It was recommended that the amount of student computer fee money given to the library be increased by 5% this coming year, 10% the year after, 15% the third year and 20% the fourth year. The Senate supported the proposal.

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## **GUIDELINES FOR EXTENDED FACULTY LEAVE RESULTING FROM ILLNESS, INJURY OR BIRTH/ADOPTION OF A CHILD.**

The following policy had been discussed at previous meetings of the Senate. The UM system does not have a written policy for faculty sick leave or maternity leave. Generally this lack of a written policy is viewed as desirable, since it allows academic units flexibility in coming up with solutions to cover extended faculty leaves. However, when an extended leave is required, the unit might not have resources to cover the absence. The following guidelines were recommended and unanimously passed:

Resolved: When a faculty member requires an extended leave of absence every attempt shall be made to accommodate this absence using the resources of the department, division, school or college. In cases where the duties missed due to extended leave of a faculty member cannot be assumed by others without the expenditure of funds not budgeted to the department, college or school, the department chairperson or division head will report the matter to the college or school dean who in turn will consult with the Provost for resolution. The Provost's office will set aside funds annually to accommodate these types of leaves.

Respectfully submitted,

