

President's Report to the Faculty Senate  
May 3, 2010

Members of the Senate,

I regret very much that I am missing the final Senate meeting of the year. Dr. Vice, Dr. Wright, and I have spent the last week visiting some fine Brazilian institutions with an eye toward developing a variety of partnerships with them. Unfortunately, our plane for the flight to Chicago over Saturday night into Sunday morning was cancelled due to mechanical problems, pushing us to a Sunday evening departure. We are scheduled to land in Louisville at about the same time as the Senate convenes.

The Senate has my appreciation for a good year, but we have much work undone. To me, the most instructive thing about the survey presented by Senator Ware and Senator Johnson at the last meeting was the overwhelming support for improved compensation. This has also risen to the top of the priority considerations of the Strategic Planning Council and the Financial Planning Council. I hope everyone understands both the fiscal and political constraints that we face in the current budget cycle in regard to compensation. With public school teachers facing what will effectively be a cut of two days' salary; there would be little understanding of raises in higher education.

The fact also remains that our future ability to improve compensation is going to depend on several factors – we must improve our ratio of net to gross tuition, we must act entrepreneurially to generate more discretionary revenue, and we must become more efficient and effectively reallocate our existing resources to compensation improvement. Efforts have already begun to address these matters, but our success will require a more concerted and dedicated effort by all concerned.

There were other points in the survey that are instructive and indicate areas where we must do a better job of communicating about sources of funds and the long-term strategic importance of our actions. For example, while it is true that general fund dollars have been used for property acquisitions, these were not recurring dollars that could be used for recurring expenses such as salaries. As some of these properties are rented, we are effectively turning one-time dollars into recurring income.

I continue to be concerned with the mindset of some that there have been decreases in the number of faculty on this campus. The facts are otherwise. University-wide faculty lines have increased modestly, but steadily over the past several years. True, some departments have lost lines, but the gains of others have more than offset them. These reallocation decisions are based on enrollment generated needs. I recognize the concern over increases in staff lines. Many of

these have been soft money funded (grants and contracts), but I admit we need to reduce staff lines – through attrition – in some of our educational and general funded areas. My two greatest concerns in this regard are these: 1) There is an us vs. them coloration to some of the survey items that, while voiced by a minority of those responding, is reflective of the divisiveness of hard times. We are a community and I do not want to see the fabric of that community permanently torn by difficult times which will not last forever. 2) I have been told someone has said, “Whose numbers should we believe?” If you know me, I hope you know I will never knowingly give you wrong data. I have seen no data reflecting we have had a decline in faculty. If you see such data, it is incorrect.

As I noted, though, the survey does contain valuable information and I appreciate the effort of those who conducted it and compiled the data. I also value both the commitment of time and the opinions of those who filled out the survey.

Later today, you will receive a report from the Council on Academic Affairs which includes proposals for the Doctor of Nursing Practice and the Ed.D. in Counseling. You are aware that we already have the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership in place and that our current SACSCOC Level Five provides for up to three doctoral programs. Lest you be concerned if these two are both implemented then others cannot be considered, let me advise you of this. Dr. Vice and I asked Dr. Michael Johnson, our point of contact with SACSCOC, what is involved in moving from Level Five to Level Six. His answer: “You submit your fourth program for review.” My point is that we do not need to be overly concerned with the Level Five or Six distinctions. Rather, we should make our decisions strategically for Eastern Kentucky University, based on the educational needs of students and the professions and on the capacity of the University to properly mount a program. Both of the programs before you today were approved at the joint meeting of the Strategic Planning Council and Financial Planning Council.

The SPC and the FPC have finished their collaborative work on the 2010-2011 budget and I have approved their recommendations. We are now building a budget based on those recommendations and on the assumption will have a 1.5 percent budget reduction and a 5 percent increase in undergraduate, resident tuition. The “use it or lose it” policy approved by the Senate at its last meeting is being implemented. We will also have a drop fee in place next year. My hope is that we collect very little in the way of drop fees. Its intention is to cause fewer students to shop courses with the intention of dropping some during the semester. Intuitively, it may also have the effect of encouraging students to work harder for a passing grade rather than take the easy and here-to-for economically painless route of dropping a class.

We are also investigating the implications on this campus should the state not have a budget by July 1. I do not believe those contingencies will become reality, but we cannot afford not to plan for such an eventuality.

I have appreciated the opportunity to work with Senator Ware as the Senate Chair for the past two years. I look forward to the same opportunity with Senator Taylor. The outgoing members of the Senate are owed a debt of gratitude by us all. To the continuing and incoming members, we have a lot of work to do next year.