

Mar. 15, 1990
meeting

Now, senate is 'more credible'

SURVEY SAYS . . .

Among the highlights of the morale survey released at Thursday's Faculty Senate meeting:

■ Faculty morale: 1 percent said very good; 7 percent good; 22 percent acceptable; 42 percent poor; 28 percent very poor.

■ Faculty influence on decision-making: 1 percent very good; 6 percent good; 19 percent acceptable; 43 percent poor; 31 percent very poor.

■ President's performance: 5 percent very good; 17 percent good; 36 percent acceptable; 25 percent poor; 17 percent very poor.

■ Department head performance: 29 percent very good; 31 percent good; 21 percent acceptable; 9 percent poor; 10 percent very poor.

■ Spending priorities: 0 percent very good; 5 percent good; 18 percent acceptable; 40 percent poor; 37 percent very poor.

By S. KAYE SUMMERS

The Faculty Senate chairman said he believes a survey of faculty that labels the administration as unresponsive will improve relations between the senate and President Thomas Meredith.

Until the survey was released at Thursday's senate meeting, the administration "felt we didn't represent the majority of the faculty," Bart White said.

But the high response rate to the survey — about 75 percent — proves "we actually do represent the faculty. It's not a small group expressing personal opinions."

"We're more credible than before," White said.

The administration's responsiveness to faculty concerns was ranked poor or very poor by 74 percent of the 423 respondents.

Meredith said after the report that he has "always listened to the senate with respect."

He said the question about responsiveness needs "some clarification" because he doesn't know

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Invite to union 'in poor taste'

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"what level of administration that refers to . . . (or) what it means about responsiveness."

And on the question concerning the president's performance — rated as poor by 42 percent — Meredith said he chooses to view the response as "58 percent positive."

Meredith said he is "working hard to improve communication" with faculty. He noted faculty involvement with the budget and planning committee, department head selections and Western XXI — a committee established last semester to address the university's future.

"I hope the administration uses the results (of the survey) as a tool in making decisions about the direction of the university," survey coordinator Jim Wesowski said.

Other low grades on the report card: 70 percent rated morale as poor or very poor, 74 percent said the climate for faculty influence on decisions was poor or very poor and 77 percent said university spending priorities were poor or very poor.

Two United Auto Workers representatives spoke at the meeting and suggested ways a union could be started:

■ A collective bargaining law. A bill for collective bargaining has been placed in committee of the General Assembly, said Brenda Upchurch, an organizer for the technical, office and professional arm of the UAW from Indianapolis.

■ Petition the Board of Regents. This would be recognized by the regents so that concerns can be discussed.

But "it is highly unlikely that those people are ever going to want you to organize," Upchurch said.

A signed contract with the administration would give faculty and staff more bargaining power because it is binding, said Gene

Puckett, a UAW organizer from Paducah.

But "I don't know of any institution that is going to allow and recognize you as having a right to bargain," he added.

■ Strike.

A strike "is not something we necessarily recommend or support, but it is a tool you can use effectively," Upchurch said.

"People immediately think of a strike when they hear the word union, but we do much more than that," she said. That reputation causes some people, professors for example, not to join unions.

■ Boycott the university.

The Teacher's College of New York experienced a 25 percent drop in enrollment when union supporters didn't send their children there, she said. But the boycott succeeded in New York — a highly unionized state, Upchurch noted.

Puckett said, "There's not much strength without a right to bargain collectively, but that doesn't mean there's not good coming from the situation." Recognized unions could "make an effort to get (collective bargaining) bills passed, for example."

About 15 Physical Plant workers attended the meeting. "Your needs aren't their needs," Upchurch told them. "You are a separate community of interest, and you choose your own representatives."

Ricky Bibb, a campus painter and organizer of a petition against the health insurance situation, said interest in a union is high now "because the people are tired of the way salaries are going."

Board of Regents chairman Joe Iracane said the senate's inviting the union was in "poor taste" because it was like "putting the cart before the horse."

"Money is the issue, and the issue is a state issue," Iracane said. "The cure has to be additional funding from the state."

Some senate members were reluctant to release the results

concerning Meredith's job performance.

"Items in here deal with whether the president is doing a good job are similar to student evaluations (of teachers)," said Joan Krenzin, a sociology professor.

"Nobody's ever published that," she said. "Perhaps that same courtesy is owed to the president."

But a majority agreed with John Bruni, an assistant psychology professor who said the senate had a responsibility to release the results and added that the senate would lose credibility if all results weren't released.

Other questions addressed in the survey:

■ Working conditions and job satisfaction: 7 percent very good; 26 percent good; 36 percent acceptable; 22 percent poor; 10 percent very poor.

■ Working relations with other faculty: 29 percent very good; 45 percent good; 19 percent acceptable; 6 percent poor; 0 percent very poor.

■ Merit pay system: 12 percent very good; 15 percent good; 15 percent acceptable; 29 percent poor; 29 percent very poor.

■ University's expectation that faculty be proficient in teaching, research and service: 8 percent very good; 11 percent good; 20 percent acceptable; 33 percent poor; 29 percent very poor.

■ Governance system: 1 percent very good; 10 percent good; 34 percent acceptable; 36 percent poor; 20 percent very poor.

■ Faculty Senate's choice of issues: 8 percent very good; 30 percent good; 40 percent acceptable; 12 percent poor; 10 percent very poor.

■ Faculty Senate's performance: 11 percent very good; 36 percent good; 33 percent acceptable; 12 percent poor; 9 percent very poor.

Laura Howard also gathered information for this story.

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