

FACULTY SENATE XX NEWSLETTER

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The Senate newsletter this year will attempt to provide news and data of relevance to faculty and the wider university community. Realizing that there is a great deal to be gained with a proactive and goal-driven academic vice president now in place, the role of op-ed editorial pieces, often viewed as critical of upper administrative practices, has been minimized. Data and information provided by the various Senate committees should provide appropriate insight into university areas and issues of faculty concern.

----- Bart White

From the Chair

Welcome and welcome back! To the many new faculty members who have joined us this year--your numbers are greater than we have had for several years--we want to say that we are pleased that you are with us and we look forward to getting to know you. The Faculty Senate is your organization and we hope that we will be able to be of service to you and that you will become informed about our activities.

To all those who are returning, we want to wish you a good year. The new year brings new challenges. Higher education is undergoing many changes and facing new challenges; we hope that the Senate, with your support, will be able to make a significant contribution in dealing with issues here at Western.

Finally, I want to say, "Welcome and welcome back" to Barbara Burch, our new Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Since you have just joined us, we welcome you; since Western is your Alma mater, we welcome you back! As members of the Senate, we are looking forward to working with you, and we hope you have many productive years here at Western.

----- Arvin Vos

At the first Faculty Senate meeting of this semester, the term "white counties" was mentioned several times during one of the committee reports. Several faculty wondered exactly what was meant by the term, so here is the answer from information provided by Director of the Budget, Ann Mead.

The Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Council on Higher Education have drawn a ten year, county by county, picture of educational attainment in Kentucky. These maps show the counties with the lowest educational attainment and the lowest college attendance rates in white. The darker the coloring becomes, the higher the educational attainment and college attendance for that county. Lighter gray counties indicate improving educational levels. Some Kentucky counties, like Warren, are almost black in color (meaning 6% or more of the county population age 18 and above were enrolled in a Kentucky college). Warren, however, is totally surrounded by "white counties" (where less than 4% were enrolled).

The implications that can be drawn are that Western is in an area of great recruiting potential, as educational levels in our "area" are significantly lower than in other parts of the state. The "white counties" are also the areas where our extended campus sites are located, thus making recruitment an issue since the major affordable educational delivery mechanism for many seems to be the UK community college system. Since Western is not authorized by state statute to have a competing "community college network," we have to work hard to make our extended campus courses compete with the lesser expensive UK alternative.

In effect, we are less competitive as we can't charge community college rates. So, to make the "white counties" work for us, the administration feels that faculty must get involved in the recruitment process to personalize the experience of those who do choose to pursue further educational opportunities and have the choice to choose Western or, possibly, a less expensive alternative.

----- Bart White

WKU ATHLETIC INCOME FOR 1996-1997

Reviewing the athletic budget for the current academic year is an interesting experience. Remembering that the Council of Higher Education showed Western last year losing more money than any other regional university (\$2.25 million), let's hope the projected income this year matches the expenditures!

The new \$25 per semester student fee will raise an additional \$637,325 on top of the \$295,000 projected from the old fee of \$15 per student per semester. The combined total from these student fees is \$932,325 or just over 18% of all projected revenue. Total ticket income from ALL Western sports is only \$608,000, far less than the mandatory income provided by the students.

Most of the projected nearly \$5 million income comes from state appropriation (\$1,707,919) and allocations from tuition (\$944,350). The rest will emanate from Sunbelt and NCAA distributions, parking, concessions, the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation and the Hilltopper Sports Network.

Needless to say, the students, and the taxpayers of the Commonwealth, whether they support their Hilltopper athletic teams or not, are paying in large part for the athletic program on the Hill.

Technology and Higher Education

Technology was the focus of the **Governor's Conference on Higher Education Trusteeship**, held on September 15-16, 1996, at the Cincinnati Airport in Erlanger. From a faculty perspective this conference highlighted both the challenge and the dangers of technology. The conference presentations contained two contrasting views of the role of technology for the future of education. Which of these two visions dominates will make an enormous difference for education in Kentucky, and a huge difference for us as faculty members. We will do well to take these discussions very seriously and to take every opportunity for making thoughtful input into the decision-making process.

The healthy approach to technology--this is my characterization--was presented by Lucinda Roy, Associate Dean of Curriculum, Outreach, and Diversity at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Roy, who is on loan to administration from Black studies, is a poet and has a forth-coming novel. I mention these details, since it may help to understand her view of the role of technology. In what follows, I sketch some of her main concerns, as I was able to glean them from her presentation.

The title of Roy's presentation was "How Technology is Changing Teaching and Learning." She began by saying that there is only one reason to be using technology--because it can help us teach more effectively.

Simple as this principle sounds, it proves to be startling difficult to apply. Before we can discover what will enable us to teach more effectively, we need to know what we are accomplishing now. "Delivery does not equal learning." We may be able to point to what we are putting into a lecture, etc., but what we need to know is what our students are getting from it. In short, before we embark on using any technology, we need to ask some basic questions: 1) Why do we want to do this? 2) What problems are we trying to solve? 3) What do we want to retain? (This is a key point.) 4) How can we best assess the programs we develop? 5) What do we want students to learn?

The last question is the most important; the answer to it states our goals. If we are clear on our goals, we have a standard by which to assess our programs, and this will tell us what we want to retain and what needs improvement. Identifying the areas needing improvement will give us our problems and our rationale for seeking help, perhaps using technology.

With regard to technology, there are a number of claims being made, according to Roy, of which we should be wary. First, a cost benefit is claimed. Sometimes this may result, but often it does not. Cost benefits are far from assured, for technology can be enormously expensive. Secondly, it is claimed that there are savings through the quality of education produced--but this is not to be assumed but rather demonstrated. Thirdly, there is "the seer's approach." Technology, we are assured, is the answer to our problems. Right now we may not know how, but we will in the future. Finally, remember again, "delivery does not equal learning"--just making information available does not mean that students will learn.

Dean Roy recounted her Virginia Tech experience. There faculty members were supplied computers only after they had completed a workshop on how to use them. In their case, she indicated that faculty enthusiasm has made the difference. Rather than "top-down change, she indicated that the initiative must come from below. If a few innovative faculty members in each department or college develop programs for using the technology effectively, then others will come aboard--if not willingly, then because students will demand it of them.

The easy part with technological change is supplying the equipment. With such material change, however, comes the need for cultural change, a shift in attitudes and practice. Cultural change is difficult; it requires a lot of time and energy. There is often faculty resistance to new technology, Roy noted, but for a good reason: they are being asked to change, and change involves a lot of work. Finally, cultural change is difficult not just for faculty but for students too. Unless they can be inspired to use the new technology, nothing will be gained.

Summing up, Roy stated that there are several ingredients necessary for technology to enhance learning: excellent, dedicated teachers, a focus on student productivity and self-paced, active learning, collaboration in learning, and, finally, an emphasis on response rather than input. Not suprisingly, she suggests that 20-30% of the funding for technology be directed toward assessment. Equally important is faculty development; faculty must be rewarded for developing the use of technology. Without their initiative and creativity, no amount of money invested in

equipment will do anything for learning.

In contrast to the learning-focussed approach of Dean Roy, there was the presentation on the "Western Governor's University" in a video presentation by Gov. Leavitt of Utah, and, along the same lines, an account of the proposed "Commonwealth Open University," by John Shumaker of the University of Louisville. In both of these presentations I sensed a confidence that I do not share, namely that the new technology will open a new era in education, both in quality of learning and in efficiency. Both of these proposals are remarkable in the way that they proceed in ways opposed to that advocated by Dean Roy and in how they fail to address the difficult questions that she faces.

A thoughtful critique of the WGU proposal can be found in the "Point of View" by Kenneth H. Ashworth in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 6, 1996. Ashworth is concerned both with the extent to which the proposal is driven by business concerns and with the lack of faculty control over quality. He concludes that "the kind of virtual university envisioned by the Western Governor seems likely to produce only virtual learning" (p. A88). From what I heard at the Governor's Conference, I am inclined to agree. It appears to me that this structure is likely to serve only a small niche market--students who have already acquired all the necessary study skills and who are looking for training in a specific skill or area. Most of the course proposals we were shown were of a technical nature.

With regard to the **Commonwealth Open University** proposal, the draft of this proposal focusses almost entirely on organizational structure--how programs will be accredited, students assigned to home institutions, etc. Rather than facing the problems involved with learning, it ignores them. I offer the following paragraph as evidence:

Faculty must be comfortable with technology, the use of electronic mail and the Internet. Faculty development programs in the use of distance learning technology will be an essential element in the Commonwealth Open University implementation. Students must be motivated and have good study and communications skills. They must also have convenient access to a reasonably powerful computer and an Internet connection.

This statement is remarkable for the casual way in which it disposes of the major problems outlined by Dean Roy. Other than the mention of the need for faculty development, nothing is said about the cultural change that the proposal requires--change in both faculty and students. Unless it is shown how our typical Kentucky student will acquire these "study and communication skills" this Commonwealth Open University is not for our students. This is the major cultural problem that must be faced head-on by any viable proposal.

But even on the simpler side, that of material change, this proposal is far too optimistic. Equal access to a computer and internet are not minor requirements. If the state supplies the equipment for such access at a large number of sites, this proposal will result in the spending of huge sums of money; if it does not, few will have access.

Before the Commonwealth Open University is launched, we need to assess where we are, note what we are doing right, and assess what must be improved. In addition, we need to do a realistic cost analysis. How many students will such a program reach, and at what price? Our resources are limited and there is the potential for making enormously expensive mistakes.

As it now stands, the Commonwealth Open University, like the Western Governors University, will serve at best a very small segment of the population--probably those who already have a university degree and wish to acquire some technical training. Governor Patton is committed to improving post-secondary education, but this proposal needs close examination before it is adopted. Let us make certain that the technology we acquire serves us; not that we serve it.

----- Arvin Vos

Comments by Dr. Burch, Vice President for Academic Affairs, to the Faculty Senate, September 12, 1996

I am committed to doing whatever we must so that Western Kentucky University achieves with excellence our primary mission; that is the mission of "Student Learning." It is important to note that our focus has to be learning, and not just teaching. I expect to work closely with the Faculty Senate to accomplish shared goals as I address my responsibilities to this university and those we serve.

I feel both privileged and pleased to be at Western Kentucky University. I believe we have excellent foundations upon which to build, and the opportunity to work collaboratively with the faculty to achieve academic goals and quality learning for students.

The faculty are central in the making of the University; without faculty we don't have a university. Faculty should be at the forefront of raising relevant issues to consider in shaping the future of the organization in which we exist. To meet the challenges facing us, we cannot continue to do everything just the way we now do it. I want to work with the faculty hand in hand as we find ways to achieve new levels of excellence in our effectiveness and efficiency. We must focus on working collaboratively to achieve results, and the results that count most are ones which reflect student learning. We must be a learning community in which it is clear that we are responsive in advancing the common good of the communities we serve. I look forward to working with you as we strive toward achieving new levels of excellence.

Faculty/Staff Luncheons

The Catering and Beverage Management class in the Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Program will be presenting six faculty/staff luncheons during the fall semester. These luncheons will have a fixed menu with a fixed price, ranging from \$3.50 to \$5.00 depending on the menu. The class will provide full table-service for each meal. Our goal is to attract approximately 40 faculty/staff for each event.

The dates for the luncheons will be: September 26; October 10 and 17; and November 7, 14 and 21. Serving times for the meals will be between 11:00 - 12:30 in the quantity food laboratory dining room in the Academic Complex (AC-213). Flyers will be circulated to each department on campus announcing the menu, price and procedure for purchasing tickets. We ask that you purchase a ticket in advance from the CFS Department office (AC-302) or from one of the students if you plan to attend. Students who are responsible for selling tickets include: Les Martin, Anita Bass, Gustavo Villalobos, Kathy Hancock, Antonio Webster, Shelly Balbach, Greischeild Perkins, Stephanie Jones, Adam Pabey, Kahled Mubarak, Sean Porter, Melissa Scorsone-Stovall, Sheila Taulbee, Joe Micatrotto and Sandy Zippay.

If you are unable to come to the Academic Complex or you do not know any of the students mentioned above, call the department (x3999), leave your name, office number, and office hours and we will deliver the tickets to you. Please give us plenty of notice for delivery of tickets. Since we are unable to handle checks, please have the exact amount available since the students may not have change.

Thank you for your support of our program and our students. We look forward to seeing you at one of our luncheons.

-- Rich Patterson (x4031)