

Faculty Senate XXI

Vol. XXI, No. 2

2/5/98

Faculty Senate Home Page URL: <http://wkuweb1.wku.edu/Dept/Org/FS/home.htm>

REFLECTIONS ON THE FISHER REVIEW

-Arvin Vos

SUMMARY: Arvin Vos comments on the potential importance of the Fisher report, urging all faculty to read it closely and take it seriously. The report's timing, appearing almost simultaneously with the selection of a new president, makes it even more likely to stimulate change at Western.

Vos focuses his comments on issues raised by the report that relate most directly to faculty: campus governance and curriculum. The report is highly critical of the present governance structure of the dual Faculty Senate-Academic Council arrangement, calling it "one of the most illogical and incoherent we have seen." Vos says that this criticism should make us review our current structures, and he calls the report's recommendation that the two bodies be reformed into a single governing body "on the mark." He also endorses the report's emphasis on the importance of faculty expertise in determining the institution's "curriculum, methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the academic process." And he notes approvingly the report's call for open, ongoing communication among the faculty, president, and Board of Regents, including the president's responsibility to convey "faculty views, including dissenting views," to the Board.

In the area of curriculum, the Fisher report is especially critical of Western's General Education program, citing its incoherence as representing "the worst of the 'cafeteria' approach to liberal education whereby nearly any course in any discipline eventually can be utilized by a student to complete the program."

Finding such criticisms to be generally accurate, Vos writes that it is time for faculty at Western to assume a more mature and "rightful leadership role" in finding solutions to these and other problems that face us. In order to participate maturely in campus governance, faculty must be able to view issues not only from the perspectives of their individual disciplines but also from the perspective of the whole, as, for example, we discuss the larger effects our general education program should have on students.

Calling the Board's decision to commission the study "wise," Vos concludes by thanking Board members who asked for the Fisher report and challenging faculty "to seize the opportunity which it has created."

NOTE: Vos (Philosophy) is Chair of the Faculty Senate. For the full text of his article, see the Faculty Senate Home Page. See address above.

THE WESTERN INDEX

With apologies to *Harper's Index*, here are some statistics drawn from the *Western Fact Book 1997*, and the 1997-1998 *Combined Budgets Summary*. We solicit your ideas for future Index items.

Undergraduate students in	1992	1996
Warren County	2,963	2,448
Jefferson County	861	842
Barren County	835	704
Monroe County	202	229
Ohio County	189	204

Undergraduate Transfers from

Eastern	18
UK	24
UofL	18
Elizabethtown CC	91
Owensboro CC	78

Projected income for	1997-98
Registration fees	\$29,283,000
Student Athletics Fees	985,000
Student Technology Fee	859,000
College Heights Foundation	163,000
WKU Foundation	45,000
DUC Billiards and Bowling	38,000
Sponsored Programs Grants and Contracts	11,015,000

BOOK REVIEW: HOW SPORT HAS DAMAGED BLACK AMERICA

-Robert Dietle

SUMMARY: Robert Dietle reviews John Hoberman's *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), a critique of the American sports obsession which "entraps young African Americans in a world of unrealistic hopes." Many young black Americans see sports as their only avenue to success, ignoring the tremendous odds against their becoming professional athletes or making a long-term career out of coaching or sports administration. Particularly insidious is the lurking racial stereotype in the identification of blacks as "natural athletes."

Hoberman's analyses is directly relevant to university athletic programs, which profit from the sports fixation of African Americans, and are often insulated from budget cuts on the grounds that they recruit minorities. An obvious question for universities is why they spend so much time, effort, and money recruiting minorities for athletics instead of academics. The answer, according to Hoberman, lies in the "self-interest" of athletic programs and in the "laziness" of administrators and faculty who avoid the "hard work of developing new means of minority recruitment that focus on scholastic achievement." In closing, Dietle calls Hoberman's book "a courageous piece of social criticism that all educators should read."

Note: Dietle (History) is Chair of the Academic Council and has served as Chair of the Faculty Senate. For the full text of his review article, see the Faculty Senate Home Page. See above for address.

THE NIGERIAN SCAM

-Charles W. Smith

SUMMARY: Smith writes about the so-called Nigerian Scam, a scheme for defrauding people of money, apparently originating in Nigeria. Charles quotes liberally from a letter received from Nigeria, as an example of the scam, and he explains what steps to take and whom to contact in the event you receive such a letter, fax, or e-mail.

Note: Smith (Music) is a member of the Faculty Senate Communications Committee. For the full text of his essay, go to the Faculty Senate Home Page. See above for address.

FACULTY SENATE XXI COMMITTEES AND CURRENT TOPICS AND ACTIONS

Academic Affairs:

Proposed Revision to handbook to allow incoming faculty to negotiate credit for previous experience.

By-laws, Amendments, and Elections:

Will be conducting elections during this spring!

Faculty Status and Welfare:

Continued work on Salary Report; summer stipends; mileage reimbursement

Fiscal Affairs:

Part-time faculty issues

Professional Responsibilities and Concerns:

Will be presenting recommendations at next Senate meeting

Senate Communications:

Newsletter; the Web Page

Note: For full roster of committee memberships and officers, see Faculty Senate Home Page (address above). Please feel free to contact any committee member about issues relating to that committee's work.

Selected Quotes from the *Fisher Report*:

"It is one thing to 'wire the campus' and quite another thing to make that wiring meaningful" -p. 13

"Western's General Education Program . . . lacks coherence and in some ways represents the worst of the 'cafeteria' approach to liberal education [author emphasis] . . ." -p. 15

"One of the articles of faith of many members of the faculty at Western is the contention that administrative salaries are, on the whole, well above national salary means, or at least above benchmark institution salaries." [author emphasis] - p. 22

"...Western appears to devote a lower proportion of its budget to direct instruction and academic matters than most other institutions." - p. 38

Why? On the same page the authors write:

"The major answers seem to be on the generous numbers of administrative and quasi-administrative personnel and on support and public service activities." [author emphasis]