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MINUTES

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE X

September 11, 1986

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Faculty Senate was called to order on Thursday, September 11, 1986 at 3:25 p.m. with Chair Eugene Evans presiding. A quorum was present.

Roll Call

Absent without substitutes were:

1. Cannon, David
2. Crenshaw, John
3. Fulmer, Joe
4. Pickett, Leo
5. Weigel, Richard

Minutes

The minutes for the April 22, 1986 and May 15, 1986 meetings were approved as written. The minutes for the June 9, 1986 meeting were corrected so that the second sentence of the first paragraph under Informal Discussion reads "He understood that the faculty wanted to send a message loud and clear, and thought it should be at least clear," and the last sentence of the same paragraph reads "He indicated the need for an amendment." The minutes for the June 9, 1986 meeting were approved as corrected.

Address by the President

President Alexander explained that he had been invited to address the Senate on the subject of quality, and said that he hoped to break down some of the bureaucracy by talking to faculty members as often as possible. He said that he had spent 2½ years working on quality indicators for the Florida university system, and that, in order to define quality for a state university, we must decide what a state university should be. He agreed with Ezra Cornell, who said, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." Alexander said that we should seek diversity. He listed four schools of thought as to what a university should be (the mental discipline school, the utilitarian school, the research school, and the cultural school), and said that we should seek to encompass the objectives of each of these schools. The President cited studies showing that quality of teaching ranked first among factors influencing student retention and that many students feel that they are treated like numbers. He said that we need to provide quality teaching, a caring attitude, and a satisfactory program of academic advisement. The President declared that assessment of programs for the purpose of determining their quality is necessary. He said that governors and other groups have begun to use "value added" as a measure of the quality of education. He said that he was hesitant about going too far in that direction, as we must beware of imposing the will of persons external to the classroom upon what happens in the classroom. A state university, he stated, is different from a small, private school, and quoted the first President of the University of Michigan, who said that he had endeavored to induce every citizen of the state to regard himself as a stockholder in the institution, having a real interest in making it of the greatest service to his children and those of his neighbors, and that he had sought to make all of the schools and teachers in the state part of one united system.

Question and Answer Period

Senator Palmer asked the President if he had any concrete examples of instruments that could be used to assess value-added instruction, and he answered that he did not. Senator Krenzin said that she needed help with the interpretation of the term "value added," but did not receive any, as Alexander replied that measuring quality is "worrisome." Senator Baum suggested measuring value added by means of pre-testing and

page 23
23/11/00
post-testing, but the President did not think that such testing was an adequate means of measuring the total development of skills and knowledge in a class.

Senator Hessley asked if our student retention problem were due to a low quality of teaching. The President said that there are many factors contributing to this problem, but that we must agree that quality of instruction is a major factor in student retention.

Chair Evans asked whether Western is supposed to provide a level of education different from, and significantly higher than, that provided by high school. The President replied that we did not want to repeat high school work, that we should extend the student as far as possible beyond the high school level. Senator Humm said that she understood the President to be saying that many of our students come here with inadequate preparation, and that we have to do some remediation with them. Senator Crume remarked that, in his first year at Western, he took a course in which 24 of 30 students failed; he has often wondered, he continued, if the 24 were really that bad.

Chair Evans said that one of the students at a meeting of the student panel on minority retention had said, "one thing that would help would be for all of the faculty to do their jobs." Doing his job, the Chair observed, meant (to him) getting the students to learn something; but, in his 21 years at Western, he had not found this objective always to be appreciated by the students. He also wondered if the amount students learn from a faculty member were a significant factor in evaluating that faculty member. President Alexander said that we need to treat students as consumers and as persons who are struggling in the system along with us. He added that we need to like students; if we don't, we won't be happy professors and we won't thrive.

Senator Kummer warned the faculty against becoming haughty and forgetting that we were once in the same position as our students; he emphasized the need for continual self-examination by faculty members and suggested that some faculty members intimidate students (not necessarily intentionally) and leave a bad taste in their mouths.

Senator Flynn asked President Alexander to talk about his intentions with respect to the community college. The President replied that the community college was not a major thrust of the University, but that it might enable us to educate about 2,000 students, more successfully than the University does. He said that, given the number of community colleges the University of Kentucky has established and the positive effect these colleges have had on the enrollment of the University of Kentucky, we would be foolhardy if we did not establish one. It will not cost us beyond the beginning of the program, as the State will recompense us at the same level as it recompenses the University of Kentucky. This level is higher, the President pointed out, relative to funds granted per FTE student at the universities, than in any other state in the country.

Senator Prins asked about the possibility of our community college becoming a full-grown four-year college and competing with us. The President said that there was no statutory authority for such an occurrence.

Senator Gabehart asked the President if all the Academic Deans are aware that the President believes teaching and student retention to be the objects of primary concern to faculty members. He said that some departments are being told that research is more important, and that teaching effectiveness will not be counted in the determination of merit pay. The President replied that you need all three: teaching, service, and research. He said that you could not provide very helpful service in a field if you did no research in the field, and you could not teach a subject if you did not research it. He emphasized, however, that there is no question about teaching's being the most important of the three activities here at Western.

The Chair of the Senate thanked the President.

Adjournment

As there was no New Business, and there were no Announcements, the Senate adjourned.