

University Senate Meeting
November 7, 2013 – 3:45 pm
Snell Hall 1108

Presiding: Dr. Margaret Crowder, Chair of University Senate

Minutes: Dr. Beverly Siegrist

Purpose: Called meeting for Q & A with President Gary Ransdell

Senators present: Shahnaz Aly, Jill Brown, Robert Choate, Ismail Civelek, Krisstal Clayton, Margaret Crowder, Karin Egloff, Joseph Evans, Jody Evans, Jennifer Hanley, Sean Marstin, Shura Pollatsek, Matt Pruitt, Attila Por, Tammera Race, Allison Day (for Nancy Richey), Julie Shadoan, Jonghee Shim, Beverly Siegrist, Tamara Van Dyken, D'Lee Babb (for Adam West), Aaron Wichman, Blairanne Williams, Eric Reed (for Mary Wolinski), Dawn Gannett Wright

President Ransdell began with an update to his earlier presentation about the 2014-16 Biennial Budget for Higher Ed to CPE presented at the last Senate meeting (see handouts) WKU and NKU presidents refused to sign the budget. The budget as currently developed fails to recognize productivity of WKU based upon FTEs and number of graduates and puts WKU at a growing disadvantage in relation to potential funding. As a result a recommendation was written and supported by KY college and university presidents to require the development of a new funding model for the whereby productivity will be rewarded. It is unknown what the model will look like at this time. The remainder of the meeting time was allocated to questions and answers from the audience and Dr. Ransdell.

Q – Are you (President Ransdell) confident that a new funding model will benefit WKU?

A- Yes, WKU is the 3rd largest KY University in numbers of students and graduates.

Q- Based upon the expected budget deficit, will WKUs mission continue to be to increase enrollment despite the potential negative impact.

A – (See handouts related to enrollment trends). We do not expect to see the enrollment growth like in the past, e.g. 2008. This year we have a decline in enrollment but are making plans to recover and expect that enrollment will stabilize. WKU admitted fewer students in the 'at-risk, low ACT, or remedial' category. This was intentional. Students from these categories have the lowest likelihood of graduating. Another problem area that is being analyzed is why the decline in our local feeder high schools. This year increases in numbers of international students help balance the decreasing number of instate students who entered WKU.

Q- Is there a concern that the International market is unstable or that we have reached our price point for tuition?

A-Yes this is a potential problem (price point) in both international and instate tuition. We It is difficult to identify the price point, 'nothing is without risk.' A major problem is that the tuition generated by the growth in international students was anticipated to be the 'value-added' but due to declining state funds and enrollment it was needs to balance the difference.

Q-How can faculty deal with the many 'other' issues facing our students such as family crises, inability to pay tuition and fees, stress of being non-trad students, etc?

A-Agree that these are real issues but currently not a lot of additional money to develop new resources for students. All units are working on this – 'Retention is everyone's business.' However, may not be able to help all students.

Q-What steps are being made to increase student resources at regional campuses?

A-Solutions require mostly additional administrative positions which faculty generally do not support. Options are being studied.

Q-Tuition has increase 2-3X over the past several years, how much of tuition increase is due to decrease in student enrollment and how much to supporting and maintaining the infrastructure?

A-Average cost for a 4-year degree is about \$60,000. WKU's debt is 4 ½% of annual budget which is low. Mid-year tuition increases in '94-'96 were for academic purposes.

Q-How are our costs explained to legislators and will we reach a point in the near future where the public chooses not to attend college due to the cost?

A-There is a correlation and this is being analyzed. I (President) do not believe we are overpriced. WKU is at mid-point of tuition costs when compared with other state universities. Yes, there are students who can't afford to attend regardless of the cost. Anecdotally there were students who did not return after J-term this past year due to acquiring employment. "We are in an unstable environment."

Q-Speaker stated that more often, faculty are becoming financial advisors in addition to academic advisors. Students are reporting they will complete general education at KCTCS since it is more economical. Why are costs of online courses so much more than traditional?

A-This is being tracked. Because of the additional support need to deliver and partly because of sharing the money with faculty (through DELO).

Q-What about WKU is attractive to out-of-state students? How are we leveraging this?

A-Yes, currently the admissions office is changing to focusing on recruitment, of all kinds. All forms of recruitment are being studied, and all universities are doing the same.

Q-Parents are asking, "Will my son or daughter get a job when they graduate with this degree." There is concern that we are spending too much money on athletics and should focus on what makes us special. "We can do it all."

A-Athletics is required to balance the budget, it pays for itself.

Q-What are the plans to get faculty salaries to benchmarks? Currently many faculty near retirement with the prospects of living 'near poverty' based upon current retirement anticipated.

A- Depending upon funding there are options being considered that could begin as early as spring. Considering early retirement buyouts for some faculty. "There will be tough decisions." (President) "Would you prefer raises or improved benefits?"

Q-(student) what accommodations are being made to support the labs and resources in TCNW which will close before next semester?

A.Heating system required that this planned closure be moved forward. Temporary space has been identified for faculty offices and classrooms. GAs may be in modular offices. Other areas will be relocated prior to the beginning of the semester.

Q-Is the 'urgency' to close the building real? Will the replacement plan be reviewed since it is now years old and doesn't support current or future growth?

A-Yes the need to close is real. I will ask that a meeting be called to review the plan, to determine that it is still a serviceable plan.

Q-The goal for faculty salaries is 93% of the median of our benchmarks. Why the median? This seems low.

A-(Provost) This isn't a goal, it is a real statistic. Benchmarks were chosen as something we aspire toward. We have met the goals for faculty-student ratio, now we will work on salaries. \$2million has been 'put aside' to address low faculty compensation.

Q-Can we leave with the sense that faculty salaries and benefits are now a priority. Yes, but we may not have the needed funds. Additional contribution has been committed to insurance beginning in the spring.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:15 pm.