

Faculty group to advise higher education council

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — Faculty members at Kentucky's state universities have apparently won a partial victory in their effort to get representation on Kentucky's Council on Higher Education.

The professors, through various groups, have lobbied with the past two sessions of the General Assembly to have a voting faculty member added to the council, the state's policy-making agency for higher education.

Both times they failed.

But later this year, a faculty group will be set up to advise council Executive Director Harry Snyder and his staff on faculty issues.

"There are still some mechanics to be worked out, but we've agreed in principle that such a committee is a logical step to help us get faculty viewpoints across to the (council) staff," Snyder said.

Presidents of the eight state universities are non-voting members of the council, and faculty members serve on various council committees.

But the agency has never had a single faculty group to discuss topics of broad university interest with the council staff.

An advisory committee made up of student leaders from the eight campuses was created last year after a student group was also unsuccessful in convincing the legislature to give it a voting seat on the council.

Snyder agreed to creation of the faculty panel, whose membership has not yet been determined, after meeting recently with the Congress of Faculty Sen-

ate Leaders, a group of elected faculty leaders formed last year.

"Those people are genuinely interested in maintaining quality in our institutions, and I look forward to meeting with them regularly," Snyder said in a recent interview.

Tom Jones, chairman of the congress, said yesterday that the group has not yet developed a specific agenda to discuss with Snyder.

But Jones, an assistant professor of English at Western Kentucky University, said faculty salaries and fringe benefits will be among the discussion items.

"There is a constant erosion of purchasing power to the point that university faculties can hardly exist in this inflation-ridden society on a single salary," Jones said.

"Our purchasing power has reached such a nadir that we see the best-qualified people beginning to leave higher education, and we have a genuine concern with preventing that," he added.

Jones, also chairman of WKU's Faculty Senate, said creation of the advisory panel to Snyder doesn't mean that faculty members do not want voting representation on the education council.

"There will be a move in the next (legislative) session for voting faculty representation," Jones said.

Jones said the Congress of Faculty Senate Leaders, apart from meeting periodically with Snyder and his staff, will also share mutually beneficial information from each campus.

"Every faculty senate or body generates a variety of reports about each campus's problems and concerns. We've found that we can understand our own campuses better through understanding what's going on on the others," Jones said.