A newsletter is not the same thing as a set of minutes, nor is it an official policy arm of the Faculty Senate. It's a compilation of news. Joe Glaser and the members of the communications committee—John Crenshaw, Frank Hollenbeck, Carol Jackson, Carl Kriesler, and Dwight Pounds—take notes on senate meetings and compare them afterward. We look for items of interest to people in our respective areas of the university. These form the framework for the "Meeting Summary" section of each newsletter, which operates under two important and inevitable limitations: 1) not everything the senate says or does gets into the newsletter, 2) what does get in has often been interpreted and summarized so it will fit and so it will make sense to readers who weren't at the meeting itself.

This newsletter is also a forum for faculty opinion, or at least it aspires to be. We print things people send in and would like to print a lot more. So far most submissions have come from senators, but not by design. Anyone in the university community who has something to get off his/her chest/bosom is welcome to send it. We do reserve the right to edit submitted material unless the writer stipulates otherwise, but we won't run anything before the author has approved its final form. Editing will be for style or length only; we won't change the substance of what you say.

MEETING SUMMARY

Committee on Committees

Joan Krenzin announced that Chuck Anderson and Dick Cantrell have been selected as new members of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Status and Welfare

Barry Brunson had several things to report. Any future plan to have salaries paid over ten months rather than twelve (an idea still under study) would be at the option of the instructor. No one would be forced to elect this payment schedule. He also reported that class rosters can be obtained on request from the registrar after final drop deadlines.

Barry also made available a copy of Eastern's early retirement plan, which is
basically similar to the one now being considered at Western. Eastern's plan is already in operation, though Barry didn't say how successful it has been. A recent draft of Western's proposed plan is reproduced at the end of this newsletter.

Finally, Barry submitted his committee's latest report on salaries. As those of us who eat know all too well, the news was not good. The report calls particular attention to payroll deduction trends. While gross salaries have risen since 1970, the study's base year, such deduction categories as Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Social Security have risen faster, producing a reduction of around 3% in net salaries as a percentage of contract salaries. In 1970, for instance, the average full professor at Western brought home 71.3% of his or her contract salary. In 1984/5, that figure is down to 66.7%, with roughly equivalent losses in each of the other academic ranks.

As we all know, Western teachers have lost ground to inflation over the past decade and a half. Deduction creep in health insurance and social security has only exacerbated that trend. According to Barry's calculations, the actual purchasing power of Western Faculty has fallen over 20% since 1970. While these figures are complicated by promotions, attrition, and the addition of new faculty in the past fourteen years, they do show a steady erosion of faculty buying power.

COSFL

Harry Robe reported on COSFL's October meeting at Western, saying that Jody Richards joined the group for a discussion of political realities. In view of a power shift from the governor to the legislature, some comfortable old principles no longer obtain. In particular, neither the governor nor the CHE has the political might to protect higher education interests. Faculty must appeal directly to the legislators themselves, maybe through a political action committee (FacPac?). It's not enough to work only with local legislators or only during legislative sessions. We need to reach all legislators and reach them as often as possible. Maybe students and parents could help in this effort. Harry (2698) still wants to hear from political volunteers.

Unfinished Business

Affirmative Action

Margaret Howe, representing the Professional Responsibilities and Concerns Committee, discussed Western's affirmative action effort, which she finds wanting in three special areas, all having to do with the university's treatment of women. Women already on campus, she said, aren't given enough encouragement and support to advance into administrative posts, especially in the academic colleges. Western's attempts to recruit qualified women administrators aren't aggressive enough. And the university doesn't seem as
committed to advancing and recruiting women as it is with respect to other minority groups.

Margaret acknowledged a letter from President Zacharias, which pointed out that all searches involving line positions in administration work through screening committees of faculty, students, and administrators. If the committees do not recommend women candidates in their final lists of three names (and they generally don't), women can't be selected.

Margaret's reaction was that maybe the system needs changing. She presented a motion, which the senate passed, for an ad hoc committee to investigate Western's affirmative action practices and organize a forum to present its findings to the university community. Anyone who would like to be part of this committee is urged to contact Joan Krenzin (3759), chair of the Committee on Committees.

Answering a question from Carol Jackson, Margaret said it was not the intention of her motion to limit the inquiry to affirmative action practices regarding women. The committee would look into mechanisms for recruiting and advancing other minority groups as well.

Phonathon

The senate heartily commended the Student Phonathon Committee and the volunteers who brought in pledges for $32,210 in a recent telephoning campaign.

New Business

The theme of November's senate meeting was Faculty Assignment Time--Research and Creative Activity. Edmund Hegen introduced the subject (basically, how release time for research and creative activity is funded and awarded to faculty at Western), pointing out that it is a complex matter and one that requires considerable thinking and discussion. Ed also alluded to the "Coohill Plan," printed below under its official title, "A Ten Percent Plan for Research and Creative Activity."

It was this Ten Percent Plan that the senate wound up discussing for the remainder of the meeting. Tom Coohill led the discussion, explaining the plan's provisions and taking questions. In essence the idea was that the university allocate 10% of its load time budget to support research and creativity, an amount that would allow reducing the teaching responsibility of 100 faculty members by 50% for the term of selected projects. People would have to apply for the reductions, which could extend over several semesters, and would be responsible for the results. Reductions would not be limited to members of the graduate faculty. Faculty members who did not apply for reductions but preferred to concentrate on teaching would not be eyed askance.
Discussion from the floor was animated and generally cogent. Chuck Crume had some interesting questions to raise. He asked if 10% would be enough. Wouldn't the university also need to budget for increased secretarial and support services? Would the present travel money suffice? Might not the true cost of the program, assuming we did it right, be considerably higher than 10% of the load time allocation?

The question of fairness was raised several times in many different guises. If some faculty are supported in their research and creative efforts while others aren't, and if raises and promotions are based partly on productivity in these areas, wouldn't the unsupported faculty be getting a double whammy? And how would these release time grants be awarded? Who would decide which proposals should get support? On what grounds? Would the money be spread over the colleges and departments or would the competition be wide open? Would consideration be given to the likelihood of certain release-time projects leading to grants of outside money? If so, wouldn't that penalize areas in which grants are more difficult to get?

Other questions concerned implementation. Who would pick up the teaching load for the people with release time? Wouldn't sections become larger for other teachers? What would happen in areas already stretched to the limit in staffing classes? Wouldn't faculty there be excluded by program needs? Might the grants be used to buffer declining enrollments in some areas without regard to productivity? What penalties would be imposed if someone with released time failed to produce? Gene Evans, Mary Ellen Miller, and Frank Hollenbeck were in the forefront of those raising such questions.

Tom Coohill replied to many of these concerns. He thought competition for release time would not be intense. Many people would prefer not to have the responsibility release time would entail. Others simply prefer not to do original work or are unable to. Pools of release hours would not be allotted to departments or colleges; the competition would be open. Unfairness could be minimized by considering teaching and service, not just research, at evaluation time. Tom emphasized that the "Ten Percent Plan" was a talking paper, designed to raise just the sort of questions as were aired at the meeting. Any final proposal would have to be more detailed and carefully worked out.

Dorsey Grice pointed out that unfairness was not entirely unheard of at Western under its present policies. He thought a release time policy could be worked out that would improve the situation, not worsen it. Harry Robe had a comment on judging proposals. It would be a mark of the faculty's maturity, he said, and also a source of agreement and harmony, if release time grants were thought of as coming from the faculty, not the administration. Awards could be channeled through faculty committees, maybe at the department level. Teachers who recommended projects for support could take pride in their successful completion. They could also be most stern in rebuking colleagues who frittered their release time away.
Mea Culpa

President Zacharias has written to ask that his feelings about being evaluated be clarified. Looking back, the summary of his remarks that appeared in last month's Newsletter was indeed insensitive to the tone of his presentation. To set the record straight, here is what the president himself wrote on the subject in a letter to Tom Coohill:

With respect to the evaluation of the president, I shall be happy to discuss the current procedure with the Board of Regents. I have tried to emphasize on numerous occasions that I welcome the evaluation process and am eager to do the best possible job I can for Western Kentucky University. For the record, I am the first president of Western Kentucky University to request that the Board of Regents set up a formal evaluation procedure, and as far as I know, I am the first president in Kentucky to ask for such a formal process.

Me and Margaret's Culpa

The president and several other people I have heard from were also distressed by Margaret Howe's comments on women administrators at Western. Margaret wanted me to make it clear that she was talking about academic administrators and I failed to do so. But even with that limitation, the list was incomplete, omitting Sally Ann Koenig, head of Library Public Services. Western also has several women in non-academic administrative positions--Cheryl Chambliss, Director of Admissions; Anne Murray, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs; Freida Eggleton, Director of Orientation and Assistant to the Dean of Scholastic Development; Pat Breisford, Director of the Cooperative Education Center; and Cecile Garmon, half-time Staff Assistant to the Office of the President, to name a few prominent examples.

A Women's Affirmative Action Resource

Connie Foster (3951) has information about a group that might help women interested in getting into administration. Here is the central portion of a letter she sent to the Newsletter:

I would like to highlight a Kentucky organization called Kentucky National Identification Program for the Advancement of Women in Higher Education Administration. This network is sponsored by the American Council on Education. The group meets twice a year. The organization offers an excellent opportunity for women throughout the state to gain information, contacts, and professional development in higher education. President Zacharias is a member of the Kentucky State Panel, and Dr. Paul
Cook has attended and spoken to several of the meetings. Topics have included "The Politics of Promotion," "Building a Power Base," "Management Information Systems," "Job Enrichment," "Career Paths," etc.

Proposed Policy for Optional Retirement

What follows is a policy the university is presently considering for making early retirement a genuinely attractive choice for qualified and selected faculty. At this time it's only a draft document, but it does indicate how such a policy could work:

An optional retirement policy is being proposed for a trial period of four years during which evaluation will be made relative to its continuance, revision, or cancellation.

1. Under this program a faculty member may be offered the opportunity to teach a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 semester hours per year (as permitted by KTRS). For each credit hour taught, compensation shall be at a rate of 3 1/8% of his or her salary prior to participation in the modified program. The base salary should be increased annually, by at least as much as the average increase in salary received by full-time faculty.

Those who are accepted in the modified retirement program will be placed in a special tenured faculty category; that status would be maintained for a maximum period of five years or until that person's 70th birthday. During this period the faculty member will receive, in addition to the aforementioned salary, all appropriate staff benefits except health insurance (which will be picked up by KTRS, ed.). After the special tenured faculty category period, the faculty member will be fully retired.

2. Faculty candidates for optional retirement should be given priority in receiving summer teaching assignments during the summer before the year of retirement.

3. Faculty interested in participating in the Optional Retirement Program should make a written request to the head of the department, who will forward it with his recommendation to the dean of the college. The request and the recommendation of the dean is transmitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President sends to the President those requests that he recommends for funding. The Board of Regents considers the requests recommended by the President.

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1 At such a rate the retiree could earn up to 37.5% (or 3 1/8% times 12 hours) of his or her total salary. [That is, in addition to partial retirement benefits from KTRS. Early retirees could make virtually as much combining both sources as they had under full employment. Ed.]
The best interests of the University, as related to its educational programs and mission, must be considered in the application of this policy.

This optional retirement matter will be the special topic for next month's senate meeting. If you have something to say about it or merely want to hear what others say, please come—Thursday, December 13, 3:20, in the Ballroom.

A Ten Percent Plan for Research and Creative Activity

Here is Tom Coohill's proposal, "meant to begin a discussion," regarding how the university could handle release time for research and creative activity.

History. WKU evolved as a teaching institution. In the early seventies a portion of faculty load time was specified for "research and public service." This allocation was (is) ≈ 3%. Present emphasis is to increase WKU's research profile.

Rationale. In order to facilitate current research plans, the university should adopt a formal plan. Many researchers (from now on this usage will include creative activity) insist that the key element for productive research is TIME. Lack of time for research (when pursued) results in faculty burn-out, frustration, and an inability to compete with other universities either for federal funds or scholarly publication.

Proposal.

A) That WKU set a minimum load time allocation of 10% for research.
B) That this be allocated on the following basis: 50% load reduction for 100 faculty members who wish to pursue productive research (assuming 500 full-time faculty).
C) That the assignment be formal and for a multi-year continuous period.
D) That faculty who accept such an assignment be required to demonstrate productivity by evidence of successful research accomplishments.

Some Aspects of the Plan.

A) Not all faculty would be required to pursue research.
B) Faculty morale may improve.
C) Productive research faculty may remain at WKU.
D) University visibility as a scholarly institution may increase.
E) Faculty who do apply will be required to demonstrate ability and produce results.
F) Recruitment of good faculty may be enhanced.

The senate took no action on Tom's trial proposal, and discussion of release time will continue. Anyone wanting to take part may contact Edmund Hegen, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee (4555). Or write your Newsletter.
Read It and Cheer

Anyone interested in issues facing higher education should read the recent report of a federal panel on excellence in colleges and universities, "Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education." Unlike a lot of blue-ribbon study groups, this one raises some compelling issues. Though the members are generally vague on solutions, they spotlight higher education's current problems with unusual clarity. Over the coming years, the panel's findings will undoubtedly influence the thinking and agendas of schools, departments, granting agencies, academic councils, citizens' groups—and eventually even legislatures.

Some central points raised by the report have been well publicized already. Liberal studies are given a boost by the panel's contention that general education is the center of the postsecondary educational experience and cannot be cut without great harm. Demanding accrediting agencies are taken to task. If students really need all those hours, the panel says, let them take five or more years, not four, to complete their degrees, the way architects and other vocational groups already do.

But the report also denounces erosion of faculty salaries, presents some shocking statistics on nationwide use/abuse of part-time teachers, calls for a revision of the way higher education is funded, and demands that educational programs be accountable for the quality of their graduates. Portions of the report—generally critical—deal with remedial programs, educational uses of computer technology, staffing of introductory courses, student apathy and commuterism, faculty productivity, and many other hot topics.

Some will find the report excellent. Others will probably be outraged by several of its allegations. But it marks a new focus on the problems of postsecondary education at a time when it seemed all the attention was going to elementary and high schools. In the long run that can't help but be good for us.