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FACULTY SENATE communications committee NEWSLETTER
Editor's Note

Articles in this issue include a comment on the budget reduction, a report on faculty liability, minutes from the December Senate meeting (to be approved at the January Senate meeting), and an article about the importance of reading.

The Communications Committee encourages Senators, as well as non-Senate faculty members, to submit articles for the Newsletter.

Plato on the qualifications of rulers:

...for the truth is that you can have a well-governed society only if you can discover for your future rulers a better way of life than being in office; then only will power be in the hands of men who are rich, not in gold, but in the wealth that brings happiness, a good and wise life. All goes wrong when, starved for lack of anything good in their own lives, men turn to public affairs hoping to snatch from thence the happiness they hunger for. They set about fighting for power, and this internecine conflict ruins them and their country.

Republic VII, 521b
From the Chair

The budget reduction is now behind us. Most of us faculty have breathed a sigh of relief and the consternation the budget crisis caused is now only a vanishing memory. Before we forget completely the fears it roused, we will do well to recognize those who worked hard to make the outcome what it was.

The faculty members of the Budget Committee have represented us well. Robert Hansen, Professor of Accounting, served as the representative of the Faculty Senate, and Fred Murphy, Professor of History, served as the Academic Council's representative. As you will recall, they also served as presenters, along with President Meredith, at the Open Forum which was held in conjunction with the November Senate Meeting. I want to take this opportunity to express our thanks to them for the hard work they did as members of this committee. It is vitally important that a strong faculty voice be heard on this and similar committees, and so I am very grateful for the excellent work they have done.

Of course, there are others to whom our thanks is also due--to the other members of the Budget Committee who worked equally hard, and to President Meredith and the Board of Regents. Both President Meredith and members of the Board made a commitment to protect the classroom, and carried through with this commitment. When viewed in the context of some previous budget reductions at Western or in comparison with what happened this time at some of our sister institutions, we have fared very well indeed. At some other schools the reduction was simply applied equally to all areas of the campus. One institution is cutting more than 100 classes for the spring term.

While this budget reduction has been relatively painless, we are not out of the woods. There remains the possibility of a second reduction, depending on the state's financial situation. Moreover, here at Western the full impact of the reduction will not be felt until next year's budget, when the funding base will be smaller by an amount equal to this reduction. Because of relatively conservative budgeting the past couple of years, this time the monies for the reduction could be taken largely from surpluses and reserves. Obviously, this cannot be done again. So the budget committee's work has just begun. Building next year's budget will be far more difficult than the budget reduction was.

So to Bob and Fred, and the rest of the budget committee, I want to say: Thank you for what you have done, and I wish you well in the big job you have ahead of you. And to President Meredith and the Board of Regents: your concern for the classroom is well placed and much appreciated. If you follow up on this commitment in next year's budget, you will inspire Western's faculty to do their best. Then Western's academic integrity will not suffer, even in these economically difficult times.

Arvin Vos
The liability subcommittee of the Faculty Status and Welfare Committee (WKU Faculty Senate) has attempted to identify educational activities which pose legal risk, to gather information currently circulating in the academic community concerning how to deal with liability, and to formulate questions concerning legal risk. We contacted 34 (out of 37) department heads and asked them to comment on any circumstances in their department which offer possibilities for liability and to provide their understanding of appropriate actions or where to obtain University policy on liability risks. Given the large volume of activities at WKU, few incidents were reported.

Detailing all of the activities which pose a risk would require many pages. To summarize, activities presenting a risk of liability include having visitors on campus (to receive a service or provide a service), working with dangerous chemicals, worn-out machines, animals, or in sick buildings (e.g., in Art, Journalism, Industrial Technology), traveling (e.g., to teach, on field trips, to conferences, or to supervision sites), and teaching activities, such as grading, advising, computer work, and committee work. In some coursework strenuous physical activity is a given (e.g., dance, P.E.).

Many (12 of 21) of the department heads indicated they had "no idea" of guidelines for dealing with liability or were dissatisfied with their current understanding. Some suggested that bringing up the topic of liability may introduce legal dangers. This was not simply an avoidance of the issue. Discussion may increase the responsibility to take some action and thus the risk of losing a lawsuit if that action is not taken.

The consequence of this confusion is that some department heads and faculty refuse to engage in extra teaching activities, the activities that can make the lessons most meaningful. Others, however, have no choice but to continue in hazardous activities because of state law (e.g., Teacher Education) or because the student cannot learn without engaging in the activity (e.g., Physical Education). In addition, many of these risky activities are used to promote the University in the greater community (e.g., music concerts, plays, etc.) and to encourage enrollment (e.g., Science Days). Those who try to avoid the issue probably cannot succeed because all job-related activities appear to have some inherent risk. Doing nothing may open the instructor to other kinds of liability.

While some department heads assumed WKU would accept responsibility in a lawsuit, others believed the University would not cover faculty or department heads if there was a way out of doing so. Even if the University enters the situation the outcome may not be satisfactory. Unfortunately, finances may dictate settling a case to avoid
the greater expense of court costs, even if the University is clearly not at fault. The consequence is that the faculty person feels unsupported and professionally maligned.

Where can the concerned faculty or staff person obtain information about liability? The Faculty Handbook states policies on field trips, assignment of grades, advising, confidentiality etc. Obligations pertaining to patentable products and grant activities are also laid out in the Handbook. The University does provide a group travel accident insurance plan and the Commonwealth of Kentucky provides a Workers’ Compensation policy for accidents or occupational diseases arising out of employment.

Liability insurance was often mentioned as a means of reducing financial loss from a lawsuit. Teachers can get a liability rider on their homeowner’s insurance. Frequently, liability insurance is available through a professional organization, such as AAUP. Apparently, just having insurance would demonstrate that the person was not negligent, and not being negligent is important in reducing liability risk. Several departments require students to carry liability insurance for practica and it is strongly recommended for student teachers.

The Industrial Technology area has a history of liability issues. The department head indicated that if 1) safety instructions are clearly conveyed verbally and 2) written rules are present in the classroom, then liability for the instructor is small. If instructions are neither conveyed nor posted then liability is great. After verbal and written instructions for machine use are provided a sign-off form is used to indicate that the person is certified to use a machine.

Sally Kuhlenschmidt

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“If the flight from teaching is the most serious charge against the American university, along with the pedestrian (or worse) research that results from the flight, the spiritual aridity of the American university is, for me, the most depressing aspect of all. . . .”

Page Smith - Killing The Spirit
Reading and Education
by
Arvin Vos

The quality of American education, or rather the lack thereof, has again become the focus of much attention. A spate of books and articles has appeared recently, analyzing the reasons for the present malaise and proffering various solutions. In the November, 1991, number of The Atlantic Monthly, in an article entitled, "The Other Crisis in American Education," Daniel J. Singal presents an analysis that is relevant for us at Western.

The "other crisis" that Singal considers is the fact that SAT scores have fallen since the 1960s, largely because of the decline in scores of the best students. "Our brightest youngsters," he writes, "those most likely to be headed for selective colleges, have suffered the most dramatic setback over the past two decades...." There has been a 40% decline in the pool of students scoring over 600 on the SAT. As a result, top-ranked institutions such as the University of Chicago, Columbia, Swarthmore, and Pomona Colleges have found the scores of their incoming students dropping significantly, even though they remain very selective in admission. Matching the decline in the SAT scores is the fact that few students now come to college with what he calls "advanced" skills--"a sufficient command of the English Language to comprehend a college-level text, think through a complex issue, or express a reasonably sophisticated argument on paper."

According to Singal, the primary reason for this decline is clear. Unlike before, the best students are not being challenged to read. He documents how high schools require less reading than before. Even at universities it appears that there has been a decline in both the quantity and the difficulty of the reading required. When reading declines, students cannot write as well, and there is a downturn in reasoning skills. Not surprisingly, there is an accompanying lack of factual knowledge--historical, geographical, etc. But this follows naturally from the decline in reading skills.

The decline in SAT scores has not been universal, however, for some schools have avoided it. These schools are rather typical, according to Singal, except for one fact: in them academics receives priority over every other activity. Students are grouped by ability and are exposed to a traditional liberal arts curriculum--a curriculum in which substantive reading plays a major role.

Among Singal's proposals--I invite you to read his article to get the full story--is that we "[d]ramatically increase the quality and quantity of assigned reading for students at all grade levels." Concentrating on elementary and high school education, Singal suggests that college-bound students read the same number of books as their grade number. Schools with this kind of requirement are getting results.

Singal's discussion is immediately relevant to us at Western. We
are enrolling large numbers of students who have not read widely and have not acquired the related skills of writing and analyzing. What are we doing with them? My own perception—judged admittedly from the reports of students in my own classes—is that as a whole we are "dumbing down." Members of the English Department continue to toil in their apostolate, but the rest of us are gradually concluding—regretfully of course—that our students cannot read and so we expect less from them.

The real issue is how much the rest of us in other departments are doing to support English in the task of getting students to read. We are failing! The same week I read Singal's article a colleague gave me the following insightful comment written by a Western student. It is quoted here with permission, but with personal references removed:

If there is one thing that irritates me it is when a professor lectures directly from the book, and never beyond. This is especially true for easy reading such as XXX100. This class consists of lecture and nothing more. The class is very uninteresting and becomes a bore quite quickly. So due to a casual attendance policy, I started going to class only on test days. My grade increased slightly! I feel this was because the pleasure I received by not going to class. Knowing I need not sit through the story reading hour of...[name deleted] and could maintain a good grade was nice. But where is the challenge? Why does the professor not go beyond the book and possibly provoke some interest? Why not give some outside assignments in [areas] which the book does not cover? If this was the case, I might attend class and enjoy it a lot more. I think this is why I enjoy...[name deleted] so much. The readings are not easy and the discussion is always ready to go beyond the book.

This student has made the point far more effectively than I can. He or she wants to be challenged, wants to be directed to substantive reading beyond the textbook. The student is right. A significant amount of demanding, independent reading should be a requirement for most university courses. Selections from seminal authors in each field will often do what a textbook cannot do. As Singal observes:

The more a person encounters sophisticated prose, the more he or she will pick up varied sentence structure, vocabulary in context, and even spelling, as well as advanced descriptive techniques and narrative strategies. Feed a student the literary equivalent of junk food and you will get an impoverished command of English, which is what we too often see in the current crop of college freshmen.

We cannot change our students' pre-college diet, but we can make certain that while they are with us they read substantively in each of our fields. With Singal I say, let's demand that they read, and then our students will have a foundation for writing and analyzing as well.
The meeting was called to order by the Vice Chair Robert Otto at 3:30 p.m. Senators absent without representation were: Linda Brown, Gabe Buntzman, Ann Cline, John Crenshaw, John Faine, Norman Hunter, Jeffrey Jensen, Fred Murphy, Gary McKercher, Norma Schira, Arvin Vos. Minutes of the November 14 meeting were approved as submitted.

Executive Committee Report: The chair asked Senator Robert Hansen who serves on the university budget committee to comment on recent reductions of the 1991-92 operating budget. Reflected on the letter sent to faculty by the president dated December 4, Senator Hansen commented that the following reductions were reflected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Affairs</th>
<th>42</th>
<th>29 ($37,113)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; Technology</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39 ($50,377)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 ($10,331)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President's Area</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23 ($29,716)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Athletics which is under the President's area took a $21,000 cut which would be 75% of the cut in that area. Vice President Haynes reported that no positions were cut but limitations would be put on the university lecture series and the Asian Center.

By-laws, Amendments, Elections Committee: The chair reported that Senator Rick Shanon will represent the College of Business Administration as an at large member.

Faculty Status & Welfare Committee: Senator Ken Kuehn reported that the faculty salary report will come next semester. The chair expressed appreciation to Senator Kuehn for his years of service and chair of this committee since he will be on leave this coming semester. The campus building smoking survey is completed with the results to be compiled by Institutional Research. Last year the Senate passed a resolution favoring a smoking ban in academic buildings. Off-campus travel liability is still under review.

Fiscal Affairs Committee: Senator Glaser reflected on the recent committee report in the last newsletter regarding Grants in Aid. Athletic scholarships are worth four (4x) times the support we offer our good academic students. The committee will be working on the athletic budget analysis.

Communications Committee: The chair recognized this committee's fine newsletters under the direction of Senator Jan Garrett and the contributing authors. Many positive comments have been expressed by faculty.
Political Action Committee: Senator Charles Bussey reported that he is sending the Senate Newsletter to our area legislators. He also passed out to senators a list of our representatives with tips on writing to them.

COSFL Report: Sylvia Pulliam reported that in their last state meeting that Western fairied better in recent budget reductions, less painful to academics, than most other state universities. The open records law is being supported for revision this coming legislative session. Vice President Haynes commented that personal faculty files are open for review by individual faculty anytime at his office and that the only official record file is the one in his office.

Faculty Regent's Report: Regent Evans read a statement from the Kentucky Revised Statute qualifying the role of the Board of Regents in the operation of the university and its finances. The Senate Chair expressed the support of this body to Regent Evans for his support of the audit. Historically, the Senate body and numerous committee reports have encouraged the Board's perusal of university spending. The WKU Credit Union issue has been forwarded to the state with the bidding process completed. The state will award the bid for operation.

Announcements: The President reflected that he is encouraged with the new governor as being receptive to higher education. President Meredith acts as chair of state university presidents and has worked closely with the governor's office during the recent budget reduction and will continue to express higher education's needs. He feels strongly that should there be another budget reduction that higher education should be spared since we had to absorb a major portion of this past reduction.

Senator Krenzin reminded us that in January the Garrett Ballroom would not be available for the Senate meeting, so you can expect to meet in an alternative place—possibly the Regents Room.

Adjournment was at 4:30 p.m.
TIPS ON WRITING ELECTED OFFICIALS

You can influence your elected officials by writing, writing or telephoning them and explaining how you feel about an issue. Elected officials listen to their constituents, and because so few citizens take the time to speak out, those who do have a greater influence than those who sit back and wait to be led. There is, however, a right way and a wrong way to go about contacting an elected official.

Make your contact early. Don't wait until your bill is in committee or awaiting final action on the floor. Time your contact so that your letter or phone call is received before significant action is taken.

Identify yourself. Sign all correspondence and include your address and telephone number. Your legislator may want to get back in touch with you. When expressing the official view of your company or organization, use its official letterhead.

Use the proper format. Use the proper form of address (Honorable Joe Doe) and salutation. If you don't know your legislator on a personal basis, use the title and last name (Dear Senator Doe). Always check to make sure the name is spelled correctly.

Be neat. Type or write all correspondence neatly and legibly.

Request a reply. Ask how your legislator feels about the issue, but without being demanding. As a constituent, you have a right to know.

Be logical. An emotional appeal is not enough. Back your arguments with facts and substance. Explain how the proposed legislation will affect you.

Be specific. If you are discussing a bill, refer to it by bill number and discuss its content. Don't assume that your elected official can recall the full details of every bill.

Be brief. Give your position and make your point as clearly and concisely as possible. If you are interested in several different bills, don't dilute what you have to say by trying to discuss them all at once. Phone or write on each individual topic.

Be cordial. Your tone should be businesslike, clear and cordial. Don't ask the impossible or threaten to vote for someone else next election.

Be positive. Saying "well done" makes a legislator feel appreciated and therefore more receptive later.
HOW TO IDENTIFY THE COPYRIGHT HOLDER

Often, the publisher does not hold copyright for everything that is in a book. Especially in readers and anthologies, publishers use materials from other publishers. When a permission request is directed to the wrong party, it takes more time to get the approval you need. Therefore...

ONCE YOU HAVE SELECTED THE MATERIAL YOU WISH TO REPRODUCE:

1) Go to the acknowledgement section and see if all or part of your selection is cited.

2) If you are not starting at the beginning, go to the first page of the chapter or section which contains your selection to see if there are acknowledgements there.

3) Go through it to see if there are any acknowledgements at the bottom of the page.

4) If, after following these steps, you still aren't sure, write to the publisher of the book itself.

REMINDER:

IF PART OF YOUR SELECTION FOR A COURSE PACK IS IDENTIFIED BY AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OTHER THAN THE PUBLISHER, THAT IS WHOM YOU MUST WRITE TO FOR PERMISSION.

Your library or bookstore should have two reference manuals, Literary Marketplace and Books In Print that may assist you further in identifying publishers' names and addresses.

For you convenience, a newly-revised booklet, Questions and Answers On Copyright for the Campus Community, is available through most college stores or on request from aap.

Thank you.

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"A major development in the world of higher education that merits attention is the widespread effort of state colleges and teacher's colleges or 'normal schools' to upgrade themselves to university status. No longer satisfied with their original mission—to train elementary, high-school, and, in some cases, junior-college teachers, these public institutions yearn for the status of the 'great universities.' Many faculty members in state colleges are products of essentially the same inferior graduate education as their counterparts (and sometimes fellow graduate students) at high-status universities, making the inequities more galling. The movement, though understandable, is nevertheless regrettable. It can only accelerate the decline of higher education."

Page Smith - Killing The Spirit