A number of people made the long, cold trip up the hill yesterday to attend the January Senate Meeting. Claus began the meeting by giving us an update on the activities of the Budget Committee. Below are the high points.

1) The 99-2000 budget is approximately $154 million. Of that amount, $60 million is in auxiliary funds (these units pay their own way like the bookstore), $31 million is in restricted revenues (this is money raised by grants and donations and can not be reallocated), and $107 million is in unrestricted funds. Of those unrestricted funds, the budget committee is only allowed to talk about the new money ($4.8 million).

2) Many of the recurring costs are NOT budgeted.
3) The Budget Council has changed over the years. Now there are more faculty members and some students on the committee.
4) Claus presented some tables that showed how we benchmark against our latest set of benchmark institutions (ever notice how these institutions seem to be moving targets?). According the CPE, we are 18th out of 20 in money received for student instruction. We basically need $15 million more to reach our benchmarks. We are anticipating receiving somewhere in the neighborhood of $5 million.
5) It is difficult to follow the trail to how money is spent in our institution. For example, micro-computing support is now listed under academic support. Under Dr. Meredith it was in a number of accounts.
6) Salary comparisons are difficult to make. Apparently, Ann Mead is having difficulty getting all the information from the benchmarks. Nevertheless, it looks like we are at least $900,000 short in salaries.

7) Right now there are $10 million in requests for the $5 million available and that does NOT include any salary increases.
8) At the budget meetings, there is no vote taken at the meetings. Ann Mead is now meeting individually with committee members to ascertain their opinion. None of the faculty members are entirely happy with the process especially since they only discuss new money and not the entire budget. Claus, however, is cautiously optimistic since at least there are some faculty on the committee.

Robert Dietle and Ray Mendel offered another viewpoint.

Ray was on the Budget Ctm. for six years. He stated that administrators love to get you mired in details. The real question should be: “Why can’t administrators give faculty adequate support?” He wants us to remember three facts:

1) The Board of Regents stated that faculty salaries are a priority.
2) Our primary sources for funding are tuition and state funding.
3) There will be a 5% increase in student tuition and probably a 5% increase in state funding.
If there is a 5% increase in revenues, administrators should explain WHY they can only come up with a 3% increase for faculty – an increase that will reverse a six-year policy of trying to increase salaries.

The Senate plans to continue this discussion and have an entire meeting devoted to budget issues in the future.

University Governance Document

Attention turned to a discussion of the university governance document. Ed Wolfe began by stating that regardless how you vote, it is very important that you vote next week on Tuesday or Wednesday. The voting will be conducted in your departments, it will be a closed, anonymous vote. There will be representatives from the Senate and the University governance committees to oversee the vote count. It is important to vote. This vote will determine the governance system at the university.

Then people had 3 minutes each to express their views. On the positive side, there were people who believed that university governance document would:

- Streamline course approval
- Bring many of the curriculum issues down to the college level
- Allow the university to adapt to changes in the environment quickly
- Faculty would have more of an opportunity to set the agenda
- Right now, the current Senate is not listened to by administrators, this system would help
- Faculty is not giving up power but instead they will be in a position to influence policy

Opposing arguments included:

- Right now faculty has at least one forum that is theirs – the Senate – and that allows them to speak. There is nothing in the university governance plan that forces administrators to listen any more than they do now.

- The university governance plan puts a lot of work on a few individuals. These folks could potentially be overworked and then miss important details.

- The freedom of the Senate is good. It might be difficult for faculty to express their opinions in committees occupied by administrators.

- Issues like PTR, summer raises, sabbaticals might never have had a voice under the new proposal. It was really the Senate that brought out the problems with the PTR policy and worked to have the problems corrected.

- In the new proposal, many of the current weaknesses in the structure still exist. Could this new Council really handle all of the business (faculty and curriculum) by just meeting once a month?

- The new proposal tries to change the structure of governance, the real problem is the culture. Culture will not change under any system until administration is willing to listen.

- Many of the arguments given to support a new governance structure come from the Fisher Report. In actuality, the Fisher report called for elimination of the faculty, staff, and student
from the Board of Regents. It did not say anything about eliminating the Senate. The administration continues to selectively choose those items in the Fisher Report while ignoring others when it is convenient for them.

One of the recent amendments to the new proposal stated:

While the final decision on these matters is by statute lodged in the Board of Regents and may be delegated by the Board to the President, we believe that in these matters faculty advice SHOULD BE REJECTED ONLY IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES for reasons communicated to the faculty.

HAS BEEN CHANGED TO:

The final decision on these matters is by statute lodged with the Board of Regents and may be delegated by the Board to the President. We believe that in these matters FACULTY ADVICE SHOULD BE WELCOMED AND ENCOURAGED AND IF NOT ACCEPTED the rationale communicated to the faculty.

This sentence is really the third sentence in a paragraph. To totally understand the context, you need to know the second sentence, which is:

The faculty has primary responsibility for areas such as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life relating to the educational process.

When you consider the context of the change, the amendment poses a dramatic change for faculty. (Arvin stated that this amendment was not the result of his committee's recommendation. Rather the amendment came as a result of ASAC's (a subcommittee of the Board of Regents) suggestion.

A motion was called for a vote to either endorse or not endorse the university governance proposal. By anonymous ballot, the faculty voted:

24 to 13 to NOT ENDORSE THE UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT.

Ed closed the meeting by again encouraging everyone to vote. A low voter turnout would signal to the Board of Regents and Administration that we do not care about our governance system. Voting will be on Tuesday and Wednesday in your departments.

In closing, I know you are all wondering what position the poodles are taking on these issues. Obviously, they can see the advantages of better pay. After all, poodles are very bright. They do not take any position on faculty governance. They have been too busy lately trying to get dogs in the neighborhood to form a union. Their issues are basically better treats, more walks, and less kennel time. However, they do wish us well in our voting next week.