
G. Barrett attended for J. Novak.

Parliamentarian Ferald Bryan was present.

THOSE FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Arriola, Bisplinghoff, Cordes, Crisler, Cummings, Finkelstein, Frank-Stromborg, Ghrayeb, Greene, Kang, Kim, Kolb, Larson, Loubere, Markowitz, Mehrer, Payvar, Pierce, Smith-Shank, S. Song, X. Song, Spear, Stephen, Wade, Wang, Windelborn

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 29, 2003 FS MEETING (Pages 3-5) – approved

IV. PRESIDENT’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A memorial resolution for the late State Representative David Wirsing was read into the record.

A. Kathy Buettner, Associate Vice President and Executive Director for State and Federal Relations will attend meeting – handout

K. Buettner gave an overview of the budget situation, both in the state and nationally, and of legislation affecting higher education.

Nationally, the economy is begging to turn around, but the state is lagging. The FY05 budget will probably be done before state revenues increase significantly. State tax receipts are up from last year, but still very low. The recovery in Illinois is still jobless. The state’s revenues for the next year are still subject to large uncertainties, but FY05 will probably not have a substantial budget increase.

In normal years the IBHE would be voting on a final budget to send the governor, but this year’s budget process is significantly delayed. NIU’s budget discussions with the IBHE have not yet
State legislation affecting the University includes the Truth in Tuition bill; the details of implementation are yet to be worked out. A line item disclosure requirement does not affect NIU at all, as we were already reporting in that format. No legislation affecting the SURES board was passed, but this issue may very well return.

At the federal level, the bills that have been passed have been relatively uncontroversial. However, a bill regulating tuition increases is under heated discussion; as proposed by House Republicans it would penalize both public and private institutions of higher education, by removing some of their federal funding, if their tuition increases faster than twice the rate of inflation. This is very controversial, and different versions have been submitted. This issue will probably dominate next year’s debate.

NIU has been doing very well in getting federal research money; announcements will be out soon.

Kathy expressed regret over the passing of Rep. Wirsing; he will be sorely missed. Bob Pritchard (husband of Mary Pritchard, Associate Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences) will serve out the remainder of his term.

In response to a question about how the IBHE might react to the FAC statement on faculty productivity, Kathy said that there is still a lot of education that needs to be done on what faculty really do. Ultimately, the whole issue of expectations of, and funding for, higher education needs to be rethought in the context of our situation now and in the future.

In response to a question about how NIU fared compared to the other state universities, Kathy said that the percentage reduction, 8.2%, was the same for all campuses (except that patient care expenses in medical school budgets remained the same). The cut for community colleges was 4.4%. This puts us back to the state funding level that we had in FY99, with thousands more students. There is little left to cut that will not be very damaging.

In response to a question about how the AFSCME negotiations would affect our health care costs in the future, Kathy said that we should expect somewhat larger premiums and deductibles. She also said that it would be too soon for us to cap enrollment at a much lower level than we have at present, but that this may be better received in the future. President Peters’ State of the University speech referred to the problem of increased enrollment and decreased resources, as well as the expected “tidal wave” of increased demand that is coming. This part of his speech is receiving a lot of attention around the state.

V. ITEMS FOR SENATE CONSIDERATION

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

VII. REPORTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

A. FAC to IBHE – Patricia Henry – report (Pages 6-8)
The FAC is encouraging the IBHE to become a true advocate for higher education in the state. It is becoming more and more difficult to satisfy the Illinois Commitment in the current budget situation. The IBHE is doing a lot of catch-up in its budgeting but is not addressing the way in which academics really works. Retiring faculty need to be replaced; programs need to be supported.

Agencies are being asked to reserve 2% of their budgets in case of a mid-year rescission, but whether that will be necessary or not is unknown.

The question of faculty productivity is still very much alive; the FAC is responding to it. The FAC is in support of “bottom-up” processes but not “top-down” ones (such as PQP). Dealing with this will require a lot of effort on our part.

B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee – Paul Loubere and William Tolhurst – no report

C. BOT Finance, Facilities and Operations Committee – Sue Willis and Xueshu Song – no report

D. BOT Legislation, Audit and External Affairs Committee – Sara Clayton and Beverly Espe – no report

E. BOT – Sue Willis – no report

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic Affairs Committee – William Baker, Chair – report (Page 9)

The Academic Affairs Committee recommends that a change in grading, to include grades between A and B and between B and C (and possibly between C and D as well) be considered. Faculty should poll their departments; Pres. Willis will contact department chairs and other university officials. Students should also be included in the dialogue.

A number of questions were asked about the exact point value of the intermediate grades; this was not settled although an even division seemed to be preferable. Dropping the grade of D was not discussed although having grades between D and F was considered; the committee was split on this issue. The suggestion was made that practices at other universities be looked at. The question of A+ grades was raised; the committee has not discussed this at length yet. There was some discussion about whether this would tend to raise or lower grades, on the average; no conclusion was reached. Comments can be sent to Bill Baker at wbaker@niu.edu.

B. Economic Status of the Profession Committee – Jim Lockard, Chair – report (Pages 10-11)
The committee reported on several items. First, the question was asked about why there was no coverage for hearing aids; CMS says it is too expensive. The extent of the demand is unknown, though; any information would be welcome.

Prior public service can be purchased for credit with SURS; even if you don’t want to purchase it right now you can get it validated. Contact HR for information on how to do this. The SURS website also has a lot of useful information and personalized tools.

Remember that all reports contained in the packet are available on the Web, on the Faculty Senate’s home page.

Questions were raised as to whether graduate student employment could be purchased for SURS credit; it can but you may have to insist.

C. Resource, Space and Budget Committee – C.T. Lin, Chair
D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – Ngoyi Bukonda, Chair
E. Rules and Governance Committee – Gretchen Bisplinghoff, Chair
F. Elections and Legislative Oversight Committee – Stephen Nord, Chair

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

XI. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

D. Wagner requested a discussion of ACT scores of incoming students; Pres. Willis said she would gather relevant information.

XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Minutes, Academic Planning Council
B. Minutes, Athletic Board minutes
C. Minutes, Campus Security and Environmental Quality
D. Minutes, Committee on Initial Teacher Certification
E. Minutes, Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum
F. Minutes, Graduate Council
G. Minutes, Undergraduate Coordinating Council minutes
H. Minutes, University Assessment Panel
I. Minutes, University Benefits Committee minutes

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.