

Executive Committee Report December 3, 2001

The Executive Committee met at 3:30 on November 19, 2001. Besides developing an agenda for today's meeting, our main attention was considering the report on plus-minus grading brought the Senate last month by the Student Government Association. Prior to the meeting, the reports were circulated to the Executive Committee from SGA and from Kirk Jones, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Grade Inflation, which last brought a motion on initiating plus-minus to the Senate. Guests attending the meeting included Nick Bertram and Erin Michalik from SGA, Kirk Jones, and, finally, Rita Davis and Shelley Park, to comment on potential impact of plus-minus grading on recruitment, retention, and scholarships. While concerns were raised about the possible negative impact on recruitment and retention, with no concrete data, the Committee was hesitant to move to abolish plus-minus grading. Two compromise motions were suggested. One was to continue to report plus-minus letter grading, (e.g. A, A-, B+....), but to use a flat 4 point scale. This would give more specific feedback to students without the potential of impacting GPA's. This idea was quickly dismissed. The second was to add A+ in the grading scheme to lesson the potential negative impact on A students. A concern was raised that some graduate schools have been reported to normalize GPA's to a 4.0 system when the grading system goes above a 4.0. Therefore, adding A+ might negatively impact many students applying to graduate school. The committee decided to validate these concerns and to discuss the issue further before returning to the Senate with a direction for responding to the SGA's concerns. We plan to have a report at the next Senate meeting and apologize for the delay.

As Senate chair, I have opportunity to represent you at a variety of meetings and on several committees. While not a part of the Executive Committee report, I would like to take this opportunity to fill you in on some of those activities:

First, I have met with Vice President Johnston, Senator Marsden and his staff to review work on the salary inequity proposal. Checking to make sure adjustments are made consistently and without errors is taking longer than expected. Nevertheless, progress is being made and Senator Marsden is hopeful that new contracts will be out to applicable faculty prior to the end of the semester.

Second, the Strategic Planning Committee, headed by Drs. Wachtel and Johnston, has been making good progress and is continuing to work on refining a draft and in showing the linkage between Strategic Planning and Budgeting. President Glasser will be formally launching discussions of the proposed Plan in March. Anyone who would like to see drafts of the plan in the meantime is welcome to contact any member of the committee, including myself and Senator Flanagan, the Senate representatives on the committee.

Third, as has been widely reported in the media, Dr. James Ramsey, the State Budget Director, gave an informative presentation on an "Economic/Budget Update and Forecast for the 2002-2004 biennium. The theme could have been stated, "Doing more with less". While this certainly was not the most encouraging meeting I have attended this semester, it was a reminder of how fortunate we in higher education have been. Actually, it was rather humbling to be confronted with the slashes in the budgets of very needy programs such as in Mental Health and Medicaid, while we have been "spared". Of course, the message was that this is unlikely to continue and that we need to be creatively thinking now how to continue to provide quality programs with less money. At this point, I encourage you to help set a tone on campus of responding to this as a challenge (rather than a downer) that we can collectively (rather than competitively) work toward in furthering the work of the University.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Schlomann