COSFL met 23 November 2002 in the W.T. Young Library at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. EKU representatives attending the meeting were A.G. Dunston, Gil Smith, and Carolyn Siegel. Richard Freed attended as the CPE’s faculty member representative.

COSFL gave final approval for a joint program with the state AAUP on post-tenure review or part-time faculty hiring. This half-day mini-conference will be scheduled sometime for late Spring 2003 probably on a Saturday.

Richard Freed reported on the status of the CPE President search. One to three finalists will meet with the Governor’s staff, legislative staff, university presidents, and COSFL on the 18th in Frankfort. The CPE will meet 19 December to announce their selection.

An extended discussion was held on the Governor’s “Assessment of Kentucky’s Fiscal Condition,” released 21 November 2002. The Executive Summary states bluntly that “Kentucky is at a critical crossroads.” Budget cuts thus far have exceeded $463M over three-years and the use of non-recurring funds to meet shortfalls has exceeded $680 million. Further cuts will impact service delivery as the state has no non-recurring funds to cover shortfalls. The state’s current fiscal situation, based on the revised forecast of the Consensus Forecasting Group is grim at best and catastrophic at worst. “The bottom line is that, absent increased revenue, additional cuts in the FY03 spending plan of $144M will have to be made and cuts of $365M will have to be made in the FY04 budget proposal.” Note that if K-12 were held harmless, cuts in FY04 would be 9.1 percent; they will be 5.2 percent if K-12 are included in the cuts.

Kentucky’s 9.4 percent FY2002 estimated budget shortfall as a percent of FY 2002 budget compares to 12.6 percent in Indiana, 14 percent in Virginia, 6.5 percent in Missouri, 6.4 percent in Illinois, 5.8 percent in Tennessee, and 6.9 percent in Ohio.

The impact of a 5.2 percent across-the-board cut in FY 04 to EKU will be $3.957 M in a HB1 appropriation allocation of $76.115M. This compares to $16.525M at UK, $3.877M at WKU, and $2.529M at NKU.
The issue of academic freedom was raised as per the instructions of the EKU Faculty Senate at its meeting of 4 November 2002. Sections from an article from The Chronicle of Higher Education that addressed this issue were quoted (below). The article is Elizabeth F. Farrell, "Questions About Center Follow LSU's Firing of Researcher 'of Interest' to FBI," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 20 September 2002, http://chronicle.com/weekly/v49/i04/04a01601.htm.

"[Their] dismissals [Steven Hatfill and two others from LSU's Center for Biomedical Research and Training] have prompted the [LSU] Faculty Senate to ask for a clear outline of the university's standards for accepting federal grant money."

"A similar situation could affect a faculty member," said Neil R. Kestner, president of the Faculty Senate. "The faculty is concerned about the potential outside influence these organizations could have."

The American Association of University Professors voiced a similar concern when it announced the formation of a committee to analyze developments in academe that could potentially "impinge on academic freedom." In an official statement, the association said one focus would be the federal government's restrictions on research, "particularly in the areas of microbiology and bioterrorism."

Other issues raised by COSFL representatives focused on what their institutions were doing to respond to budget cuts, the elimination of free health care coverage beginning in 2003 for a single employee at NKU, concern about the public publication of student evaluations of faculty, shared governance, diversity efforts, and questions about the additional costs of building maintenance for new campus construction.

COSFL will go online early in the Spring 2003 Semester with a Web site hosted by Eastern Kentucky University. The site will contain information about COSFL and its role in promoting higher education in Kentucky.

The next scheduled COSFL meeting will be on 18 December in Frankfort at the CPE.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Siegel
EKU COSFL Representative