

To: Faculty Senate  
From: Malcolm P. Frisbie  
Date: 12 January 2009  
Re: Regent's Report

#### 4 December 2008, Board of Regents Retreat

The Board of Regents met for an all-day retreat on 4 December 2008. There were three broad parts to the retreat. The morning session was facilitated by a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The consultant led some exercises and discussions designed to get us to think carefully about procedures, attitudes, etc. that produce highly functioning boards. She also helped us think about purposes of and procedures used during presidential reviews. The second part of the retreat was a joint luncheon for the ECU Foundation Board and the Board of Regents. This afforded members of both boards an opportunity to interact and to discuss issues of common concern. One topic that generated comment from both Boards was increasing the interaction and cooperation between the two Boards. While the ECU Foundation and ECU are separate entities, they obviously share many overlapping goals. The ECU Foundation needs to maintain its independence, however, there does seem to be room for bringing the Boards into closer interaction, which would be beneficial for both organizations.

The afternoon session was used for a fairly free-ranging discussion. Board members seemed to feel that the period of free discussion was particularly beneficial. Under our ordinary meeting arrangements, the schedule of committee meetings and then the board meeting agenda itself usually precludes extended and free discussion. While the three elected members of the Board are on campus daily, the other Board members have much more sporadic contact with the university and its day to day operations. Thus, the free discussion period offered a real opportunity to get to know the university and fellow Board members better.

#### Upcoming Presidential Review

As you know, the Board has begun the process of carrying out a review of President Whitlock. The Board is required to review the president during his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years, and every four years after that. The Faculty Handbook also requires that the Executive Committee of the Senate carry out a review of the president at the same intervals. The Handbook directs the Executive Committee to submit its review to the chair of the Board of Regents. It is the Board's responsibility to make decisions about appointment, dismissal, and compensation, and to work with the president in establishing goals for the university and for the president's performance. Thus, the Senate Executive Committee's charge to evaluate the president is designed to insure that there will be information emanating from faculty available to the Board as it carries out its review.

Hunter Bates, Board Chair, has asked me to oversee the Board's review efforts. I also sit on the Senate Executive Committee. Therefore, I am positioned to facilitate cooperation between the two bodies as they carry out their respective duties. I will work to help coordinate those efforts, but, because I will participate in the review process at the Board level, I should not, and will not, participate in the actual review process at the Senate Executive Committee level. I will ask the Senate Executive Committee to discuss with me key points of their report to the Board so that I may better represent faculty concerns to the rest of the Board.

The Board has issued a request for proposals to consulting firms who may be interested in facilitating the presidential review. Proposals are due later this week (by the 15<sup>th</sup>). Proposals will be read prior to the next Board meeting (26 January), and some or all of the responding firms will be invited to interview in person or by conference call on that day. The Senate Chair and Vice-Chair have been invited to participate in that process, and to include other representatives from the Senate as they deem appropriate.

In the last presidential review, the consulting firm has used individual and small group interviews with a variety of university stakeholders to gather detailed information about the president's performance and the direction of the university. Interviewees included faculty, staff, students, alumni, state leaders, community leaders, etc. Also, in the last evaluation, the Senate Executive Committee made available to all faculty a questionnaire. An obvious possibility for the present review that the Senate Executive Committee will want to explore with potential consultants is how such a questionnaire might dovetail with the consultant's efforts. Thus, if the questionnaire were administered and reported before the interview period, the consultant could craft interview questions that would amplify and clarify information turned up by the questionnaires.

The Board has requested that consulting companies plan to do the data collection part of the process beginning in the week after spring break to be sure that there is easy availability to faculty, staff, and students and adequate representation on campus.

As we plan for the presidential review, we should be careful to keep in mind the broad benefits of such an effort. "Evaluation of the President" tends to make us focus on the stark choices that a university is sometimes, unfortunately, faced with: thumbs up or thumbs down for the president. One hopes, however, that a university is not in such a crisis, and I certainly think we are not. If the university is functioning well, then the review becomes a real opportunity to systematically seek input from within the university and from outside its walls, as well. It is a chance to ask, "Where are we?" and "Where can we (and where do we want to) go?" The review will provide real data for the President and for the Board to work with. These data provide the foundation for discussions between the President and the Board as they, together, lay out a broad direction for the university.

The Board will next convene to review proposals from consulting firms for facilitating the presidential review and for a regular quarterly meeting on 26 January 2009.

Please feel free to contact me for further information about any of these items or to discuss topics of concern to you.

Respectfully submitted,

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