

COSFL Report

March 2, 2009

On Feb. 13, 2009 members of COSFL attended an all-day meeting at the Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education offices in Frankfort. CPE staff conducted an intensive program entitled "Discussion of Governor's Higher Education Work Group Policy Questions Related to Affordability & Accessibility." Mike Seelig, the CPE's Interim V.P. for Academic Affairs and the moderator of the event, noted that the goal of the meeting was to enable COSFL to have well-informed discussions leading to a unified report to the Governor's Work Group on Higher Education.

Topics covered in the day's presentations and discussions included: Time & Credit to Degree, Developmental Education, Transfer (e.g. students beginning at community colleges and then moving to state universities), Adult Learners & Adult Education, Minority Student Access, Veterans & Military Personnel, and Course Re-Design (i.e. anything from re-doing courses to incorporate computer technology to making them completely online).

The new CPE President, Bob King, was present and greeted those in attendance. He commented that in most states, according to the state's constitution, the state retirement system must be funded before anything else. King asks, "Couldn't we get that sort of commitment to higher education in Kentucky?"

The issue of textbook costs was raised, particularly in view of State Rep. Carl Rollins' bill (HB226), which would mandate that universities adopt textbooks by a certain deadline and penalize faculty for non-compliance. A lengthy discussion ensued with considerable concern expressed that faculty are being blamed for textbook costs when they have little or no control over this. Paul Callan, a KCTCS Faculty Regent, and others have spoken with Rep. Rollins, and it is expected that Rollins will at least remove the language concerning faculty penalties from the bill.

Another issue discussed at length was the KCTCS Board's proposal to cease hiring faculty on tenure-track. Concern was expressed that once an institution gets to having over 50% part-time and non-tenured faculty, the quality of students' education will suffer. Also, how transferable will courses taught only by part-time and non-tenured faculty be over the long term? It was suggested that COSFL should send a letter to the KCTCS Board expressing strong opposition to the idea of eliminating tenure for new faculty.

At the conclusion of the day, CPE President Bob King emphasized the importance of continuing communication between COSFL and the CPE. He recommended that in our further discussions we concentrate on a few key issues. Transfer (or transferability) is at the top of the Legislature's list, so we need to address it even though it is probably not as big a problem as legislators imagine. Other crucial issues to be considered are developmental education and the use of technology in higher education.

Subsequent to the Feb. 13th meeting, COSFL President Peggy Pittman-Munke drafted a letter to be sent to the KCTCS Board asking them to retain tenure for new faculty. Plans are underway to get copies of this letter to every Board member prior to their March Board meeting.

The next meeting of COSFL will be Saturday, March 7, 2009 at ECU from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The exact location will be announced later.

Nancy McKenney, ECU Rep. to COSFL