COSFL MEETING
January 29, 2010

Held at the Offices of the CPE
Frankfort, Ky.
1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

COSFL Members in attendance:
Tom McPartland, KSU (Former Senate President)
Ed Conner, KSU (Faculty Senate President)
Joel Jones, KSU (COSFL Rep.)
David Randall, UK (Senate Council Chair)
Tucker Landy, KSU (Faculty Regent)
Joe Steffen, U of L (Faculty Senate member)
Melissa Laning, U of L (Faculty Senate Chair)
Mixon Ware, EKU (Faculty Senate Chair & COSFL V.P)
Peg Munke, Murray State (Faculty Senate V.P. & COSFL President)
Carol Bredemeyer, NKU (Former Senate President)
Nancy McKenney, EKU (COSFL Secretary and Faculty Rep. to the CPE)

Members meeting via ITV:
Molly Kerby, WKU (COSFL Rep. & COSFL Treasurer)
Kate Hudepohl, WKU (COSFL Rep.)
Patti Minter, WKU (Faculty Regent)

COSFL members met with CPE President Dr. Robert King and with a number of other CPE staff members, most notably Aaron Thompson and Adina O’Hara, for purposes of discussing the Transfer Bill (HB-160) which recently passed in the State House of Representatives. The bill is now on the desk of Senator Ken Winters who chairs the Senate Education Committee. COSFL members are deeply concerned that the provisions of this bill, as it was originally proposed, be modified so that they will not be unduly restrictive and in violation of the academic freedom of faculty.

President King gave background on the genesis of this Transfer bill. Apparently when he first arrived to become CPE President, Former Gov. Paul Patton took him around to visit numerous legislators. King asked each one what he or she thought of higher education and the CPE. The most frequently mentioned concern was transfer. We did not have any hard data last year to show that it is or isn’t a big problem, but it is perceived as such by legislators, and if we don’t fix it, they will fix it for us!
King has been having meetings with provosts of the state universities in order to develop a set of agreements that will alleviate problems. He noted that state legislators go to conferences in the summer, and this year some of them, namely Rep. Rollins and Sen. Shaughnessy, went to a conference in Louisiana and came back ready to put through legislation to “fix the transfer problem” this spring. Ironically the Louisiana legislation that so excited our legislators has not even been implemented yet! President King told Rollins and others that the CPE was actually further down the road in its own process. Rep. Rollins was willing to let the CPE amend the Louisiana bill that was to be used as a model for his bill.

King explained that there are two items in the bill that we should be aware did not originate with the CPE and do not follow their plan. One of these is the mandate that bachelor’s degrees require no more than 120 hours. King stated a number of times that he and the CPE do not feel strongly about this provision. He emphasized to faculty that they may apply to the CPE for an exception to be made to this 120 hours rule. The motivation behind this provision was Sen. Shaughnessy’s desire to have more people graduate in 4 years.

The other item stems from 1996 legislation from Sen. Shaughnessy that was supposed to mandate alignment (of courses, degree requirements, etc.) between the community colleges and the 4-year institutions. President King says this alignment worked initially but there was no mechanism in place to sustain it as changes were made in courses at various institutions. No other state had any such mechanism for maintaining such alignment, so the CPE has made one up! Basically this mechanism would require that when changes are made in courses or degree requirements at a 4-year institution, then both KCTCS and the CPE should be notified, preferably at least 6 months in advance. He emphasized that faculty have the prerogative to make changes in courses, and he doesn’t see the CPE trying to block that. At the same time, if a new course is created at a 4-year institution, the community colleges are not required to offer the same course. However, if the course is a degree requirement at the 4-year institution, then students need to be informed that they will have to take this course when they have transferred to the 4-year institution.
A very lengthy Q & A session followed Dr. King’s opening remarks. A number of interesting facts and statistics came out in the discussion. It was noted that there are currently about 12,000 students at 4-year institutions who came from KCTCS. For the 2008-2009 academic year there were 4304 traditional transfer students (i.e. with 2-year degrees) from KCTCS and 7446 others who had taken some KCTCS courses. It was pointed out by Tucker Landy of KSU that the CPE’s own website indicates that 90% of credits from KCTCS are accepted at the 4 year institutions—in other words, the supposed problem with transfer is much overstated! King acknowledged that transfer problems are actually rare, but he understands that legislators confronted with angry constituents who’ve had a transfer difficulty will naturally see transfer as a big problem. One way the CPE is addressing this problem of perception is through collection of data. Karen Carey and Adina O’Hara are in the middle of conducting a survey of transfer students.

With regard to this Transfer Bill, King says the CPE and the Chief Academic Officers (i.e. provosts) of the public institutions of higher education have agreed upon changes to the bill, and he thinks these will go through. He has spoken with Senator Winters and thinks that the 120 hour provision might be dropped. Further, King believes he has been able to convince Senator Shaughnessy that it is not necessary to have common course numbering and identical course content throughout the public colleges and universities. Instead, the CPE and the CAOs are emphasizing common learning outcomes which could be achieved by a variety of courses. He noted that the CPE plans to maintain a cross numbering system for courses, but that faculty would not have to worry about this.

At the request of some COSFL members, President King read the actual text of the Transfer Bill as it currently exists on the CPE website. However, as noted earlier, a number of changes have been proposed by the CAOs, and this newer proposed version (not yet approved by legislators) was shared with COSFL members via e-mail several days ago.

COSFL President Peggy Pittman Munke suggested that President King write a letter to all faculty stressing the uniqueness of the comprehensive universities and explaining that the CPE is already working on the things addressed in the
Transfer Bill. This would allay further misunderstanding and alarm on the part of faculty, some of whom are already jumping to conclusions about what is in the Transfer Bill. King indicated that he was willing to write such a letter.

In the course of a discussion of the possibility of doing a cost analysis of the bill, Aaron Thompson pointed out that the CPE is proposing that the requirement for a common transcript statewide be deleted from the bill. The cost of this requirement is being used as a reason for eliminating it.

After CPE staff members left at 4:30 p.m., COSFL members spent the final half hour drafting a letter to the CPE to thank them for their efforts on this bill, and to reiterate concerns that COSFL members continue to have regarding the language of the bill. The COSFL President plans to send a final draft of this letter to all COSFL members via the list-serv.

Minutes submitted by,
Nancy McKenney, COSFL Secretary and Faculty Rep. to the CPE