

To: Faculty Senate
From: Malcolm P. Frisbie
Date: 14 September 2009
Re: Regent's Report

8 June 2009, Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Board

The Board convened in Manchester, on June 8th for the grand opening of EKU's new Stivers Building and its regular quarterly meeting. The grand opening was quite an event – the building was packed, and excitement in pride were evident in the faces and words of participants.

The Board worked on two pieces of unfinished business. The first was to conclude its 2nd year review of President Whitlock. The Board heard oral comments from Dr. Steven Portch of the Pappas Group and from Dr. Mixon Ware representing the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. The Senate Executive Committee had reviewed and analyzed responses on questionnaires completed by faculty. Dr. Portch had done the same, and had also reviewed staff and student questionnaire responses; talked with students, staff, faculty, community leaders, and other stakeholders in a series of on-campus focus group interviews; and carried out telephone interviews with selected state officials. Dr. Portch had also reviewed data supplied by EKU and had talked directly with the President.

The Board was delighted that the Senate Executive Committee and the outside consultant both offered very glowing assessments of the President's performance. A couple of comments from Dr. Portch are, perhaps, illuminating. He seemed a bit surprised at high rate of response to the questionnaire by EKU faculty. Of course, we're not surprised! I think, though, that we should pause to reflect that we really are different than faculty at other places. The EKU faculty takes very seriously its responsibilities – not just to students, but to the whole enterprise of the university. The other comment that Dr. Portch made and which caught my ear particularly was that, while the comments from faculty, staff, and students were overwhelmingly positive – in fact, more positive than he had ever experienced before – comments were also substantive. That is, they offered real insight into what is working well and where changes or improvements might be warranted.

On the basis of input from many EKU stakeholder groups, analyses by the Senate Executive Committee and the outside consultant, and its own observations and analysis, the Board offered President Whitlock a two-year extension of his contract. His contract now runs through July 2013. The Board looks forward to working with the President to seize some of the opportunities suggested during the evaluation process. This body owes its heartfelt thanks to Chair Mixon Ware and Vice Chair John Taylor and the rest of the Executive Committee for their hard work on the analysis of the many thoughtful comments offered by faculty.

The other piece of unfinished business tackled by the Board was the finalizing of the University's budget for 2009-2010. The Board approved the budget guidelines at its April meeting. In the June meeting, the Board passed the full, detailed budget. This year the University has a budget of \$288 million, representing an increase of \$14.5 million over last year's approved budget. (Our actual budget has decreased by about \$6 million over three reductions since January 2008.) In 2009-2010, state appropriations will account for 37% of our unrestricted revenues, while tuition and class fees will account for 51%. The budget includes a \$2.9 million reserve to meet an anticipated further reduction of state appropriations that may materialize in mid year. So, times are tight, but EKU is in sound financial health and is working proactively to position itself to meet further economic constrictions.

In other business, the Board approved 39 curriculum items. Among these was the new associate of general studies program. The Board approved policies that set the required number of upper division hours to 42 (from 43), articulate criteria for achieving graduate faculty status, and modify the procedures for carrying out evaluation of first year, tenure track faculty members. The Board approved a new policy governing scheduling of university facilities which will utilize a new software system and coordinate the request/approval process. The proposed policy governing use of university bulletin boards which arose in SGA was also approved. Academic Affairs asked for, and was granted, approval to reallocate \$1,184,585

in one-time funds into a pool to be used to hire temporary faculty. This money is the residual of one-time monies that were allocated to Academic Affairs in 2006. Their use now to hire temporary faculty eases short-term staffing needs, but, it is recognized by Academic Affairs and the Board, that use of these monies in this way creates a structural imbalance in the Academic Affairs budget which will need to be met in some other fashion next year.

Thirteen retiring faculty members (Joy Allameh, English & Theatre; Ross Clark, Biological Sciences; Ron Dean, Government; Bonnie Gray, Philosophy & Religion; David Sefton, History; Guenter Schuster, Biological Sciences; Kerstin Warner, English & Theatre; Frank Williams, Philosophy & Religion; John Thomas, Curriculum & Instruction; Joanne Guilfoil, Curriculum & Instruction; Dena Demaree, Baccalaureate & Graduate Nursing; Anne Blakeney, Occupational Therapy; Joan Jinks, Associate Degree Nursing; Cedaliah Melton, Associate Degree Nursing) were approved for faculty emeritus status.

The Board will welcome three new members to its ranks at its next meeting: Afsi Siahkoohi, SGA President; Nancy Collins, an attorney from Hazard; and David Sloan, an attorney from Fort Mitchell. Alex Combs, outgoing SGA President; April Pergrem; and Orson Oliver have completed their terms on the Board.

Six members of EKU's Board and several members of EKU's upper administration participated in the Governor's Conference on Postsecondary Education Trusteeship on Friday, 11 September in Bowling Green. Several moments from the conference stood out. I listened to former governor and current chair of CPE Paul Patton, Senator Ken Winters, and Representative Carl Rollins talk about the upcoming 2010 legislative session. The General Assembly will be under tremendous pressure caused by a much reduced state revenue stream. While the Governor Beshear has shown that he values P-12 and postsecondary education in Kentucky, it is also clear that the legislature will not be writing blank checks for higher education. They are going to want transparency and accountability in use of state appropriations by institutions of higher learning. So, I think we can expect belt tightening and increased scrutiny over our use of resources. Kati Haycock, President of The Education Trust gave a fascinating address examining access to and student success in higher education. Her take home message was that while the usual suspects such as decreasing state appropriations, poorly prepared students, low income of student families, indeed, are factures that contribute to low rates of student success, they do not explain all of the variance in student success. She examined several institutions that do better than comparable institutions at retaining and graduating students, and made a compelling argument that there are lots of different things that institutions can do to increase student success if they scrutinize appropriate data and attack the problem. It was clear at the conference that CPE will continue to put pressure on institutions to increase retention and graduation rates. We will all need to be innovative and analytical participants in EKU's student success efforts in the months ahead.

The two Acorn Award winners were announced and presented with their awards at the conference. Both gave unusual and intriguing acceptance speeches. The award winner from two-year institutions (an English professor from Maysville CTC, I believe) made an eloquent defense of the value of tenure in higher education. An unusual point that he made in this regard was that tenure protects not just faculty member, but also students – from professors who might not profess truth or important, but controversial ideas, within a discipline due to concern over offending administrators or students or others. It was an interesting and well crafted statement to make in a room full of trustees, including the KCTC System trustees.

The Board will next convene for a regular quarterly meeting on 19 September 2009, following a groundbreaking ceremony for the Noel Studio in the library.

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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