

COSFL REPORT FOR ECU FACULTY SENATE MEETING

Nov. 30, 2009

COSFL MEETING

Nov. 21, 2009

CPE Offices in Frankfort, Ky.

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

The Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership for Higher Education met at the Frankfort offices of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) on Saturday, November 21, 2009. The following members were present:

Nancy McKenney (EKU)–COSFL Rep. & Faculty Rep. to the CPE
Carol Bredemeyer (NKU)–COSFL Rep.
Molly Kerby (WKU)–COSFL Rep. & Treasurer
Kate Hudepohl (WKU)–COSFL Rep.
Tom McPartland (KSU)–Former Senate President
Ed Conner (KSU)–Faculty Senate President
Mollie Swanson (UK)–Senate Vice Chair
Tucker Landy (KSU)–Faculty Regent
Melissa Laning (U of L)–Faculty Senate Chair
Bob Staat (U of L)–Faculty Senate Vice Chair
Peg Pittman Munke (Murray State)–COSFL President

Minutes of the October 2nd meeting

The minutes of the previous COSFL meeting were approved as distributed by e-mail.

Report from the Faculty Representative to the CPE:

Governor's Higher Education Work Group:

Faculty Representative Nancy McKenney submitted her full report by e-mail prior to this meeting and also provided print copies. She also gave members handouts of the Executive Summary from the recently completed “Final Report of the Governor’s Higher Education Work Group” and also COSFL’s recommendations, which are in Appendix B of that report. She pointed out that she had had a concern about item 3B under “Cost Efficiencies and Cost Containment” in the HEWG report. This item says that a statewide summit should be held to bring together higher education and other professionals to discuss strategies for saving money. One of the categories to be examined is “Academic programming.” One of the original suggestions under that category was “increasing faculty course loads.” McKenney strongly objected to that suggestion even being included because most faculty already carry heavy course loads and typically work 55 to 70 hours a week; heavier course loads will simply result in less scholarship and service being done. ECU’s President Doug Whitlock suggested changing this item to “increasing faculty and staff productivity” and McKenney and the other members of the HEWG agreed.

Nov.6th Meeting of the CPE:

The most important business at the recent CPE meeting was the approval of the “2010-2012 Operating and Capital Budget Recommendation.” McKenney explained that this is a very bare bones budget request. Newspaper stories may say that the request is for an increase of 4.6 percent for the first year of the biennium and 2.7 percent for the second year. However, this assumes that money will be provided for “strategic initiatives” of each campus (the main emphasis being on improvement of graduation and retention). In the present economic climate it seems unlikely that the strategic initiatives will be funded. In that case, the budget increase would only be 2.2 percent for the first year and 0.4 percent for the second. The main concern is to replace 70 million dollars worth of federal stimulus money which will run out after the current biennium.

In answer to questions from COSFL members McKenney indicated that she thinks this budget is reasonable and that it is essentially just trying to maintain stability. The CPE’s President Bob King has done a good job of preparing the Legislature by showing the budget request to various members and getting their feedback that it looks reasonable, though at this early stage they will not commit themselves.

Legislation Being Proposed to Mandate Transfer between KCTCS and the Regional Universities:

Ed Conner, KSU Senate President, brought an urgent concern to the attention of COSFL members: It has been brought to his attention that legislation is being drafted by State Rep. Carl Rollins, with input from State Senator Tim Shaughnessy, that would mandate transfer policy for students moving from KCTCS to any of Kentucky’s 4-year public institutions. The proposed bill states that all bachelor’s degree programs must require only 120 hours, with exceptions only for programs whose accrediting agencies require them to have more hours. Because of concerns on the part of Sen. Shaughnessy that there be common course numbers and common learning outcomes, no changes in the 30-hour general education core courses could be made by 4-year institutions without their consulting KCTCS first.

Aaron Thompson and Jerry Warmouth at the CPE have proposed modifications to the Transfer Bill in an attempt to make it consistent with the CPE’s CAO (i.e. Chief Academic Officers) Transfer Action. [COSFL President Peg Pittman Munke has sent out a copy of the CAO Transfer Action and also a copy of a draft of the Transfer Bill.]

Discussion of the Transfer Bill:

Numerous concerns regarding this legislation (which would be an amendment to KRS 164) were expressed by COSFL members. It might be damaging to honors programs such as that at KSU. The University of Kentucky only recently restructured its entire general education program.

This bill undermines academic freedom. It assumes that all courses with the same number are alike. It also undermines the autonomy of our universities, all of which have their own unique missions. It was pointed out that House Bill 1 (of 1997) states that each university has its own mission.

COSFL’s President Peggy Pittman Munke emphasized that the Transfer Action plan is the CPE’s effort to circumvent harmful effects of the proposed legislation. COSFL should provide some language to the CPE and stand with them. A couple of our members might talk with Aaron Thompson. Munke noted that she has gotten herself appointed to the Transfer Committee (of the CPE).

One of the strongest objections COSFL members have to this legislation is that it might result in faculty losing their ownership of curriculum and curriculum decisions. This would be a violation of the academic freedom of faculty. Having non-academics in the Legislature micro-managing academia is a very bad idea.

We do need to acknowledge that we are concerned about graduation rates. We need to have the CPE represent us. It is reasonable for the Legislature to set the goals, but the implementation should be left to us.

One problem is the lack of comparable outcomes even among community colleges. One COSFL member deals with 4 community colleges and finds considerable variation in the students from each of these schools.

The requirement to clear changes in any of the courses that are part of the 30 hour common core with KCTCS is a bureaucratic nightmare. KCTCS' work load could increase 8-fold if this goes through. Figuring out the potential cost of this bill might be a way to counter it.

Peggy Pittman Munke asked that all the information provided today be put on the COSFL list-serv as soon as possible.

Textbook Cost Savings Recommendations:

COSFL has been given a charge by CPE President Robert King to make some recommendations for helping students to save money on textbook purchases. Peg Pittman Munke suggested that we come up with a list of recommendations and then ask our faculty senates to adopt them as a policy.

The following are some of the ideas shared in this brainstorming session:

1. Suggest that at the end of the semester bookstores post all books for courses for the following semester. Students could then look for books online, etc. Posting the list online would be good. (It was noted that getting faculty to turn in orders in time is a problem with this idea.)
2. Allow students to use older editions of texts as often the changes from edition to edition are slight.
3. Change the current practice of requiring scholarship students to buy books on campus.
4. Get campus bookstores to implement a "book match" policy, i.e. if a student can find something cheaper, the bookstore will match the price. (WKU's bookstore does this.)
5. Encourage all faculty to check book prices in *Books in Print* when selecting texts.
6. Ask if the campus bookstore will buy back all copies of an older edition if the faculty member promises to keep using them for at least 5 years.
7. Investigate consortial agreements for purchase of textbooks statewide, etc.
8. Encourage the use of library reserves (electronic or print) if only a small portion of a text is to be used for the class.

Next Meeting of COSFL:

The plan is for COSFL to meet jointly with the CPE in January 2010. Possible dates include Jan. 26, 28, or 29. COSFL's President will contact the CPE and see what date will work for their staff.

Possible agenda items:

Transfer issues and the pending legislation

Diversity issues (15 minute presentation?)

Budget issues presentation (How good is consensus forecasting and the current model?)

An open forum where we can raise issues of concern to faculty (reduction in retirement benefits, erosion of professional faculty, increasing use of adjunct faculty, etc.)

It was also pointed out that we should propose (and provide) a workshop on faculty governance for the trusteeship conference to be held in September.

Campus Reports:

Health costs have gone up at both WKU and Northern. Other campuses have apparently held the line on health costs.

KSU–Lack of raises and increasing demands on faculty are taking a toll on morale. They currently have an interim provost. The search for a provost is in limbo. They are expecting a good report with regard to their SACS re-accreditation.

UK–The revision of their general education is a good example of shared governance. The new policy regarding retirement is a “downer.” The Senate is reviewing grievance policies, and a revision of the university’s “redbook” (handbook) is in the works. They are conducting a search for a professional ombudsman.

Murray State–A registrar search is being conducted; they are seeking someone with Banner experience. They are using a national search company for the process.

EKU–A provost search is underway. Thanks to our Senate Chair, Mixon Ware, the search committee was set up in a manner appropriate for shared governance. Faculty were encouraged to nominate other faculty or to self-nominate for the committee instead of simply being appointed by the Senate Chair.

WKU–A provost search is underway. Several of their administrators got big raises and 260 faculty and staff signed a petition protesting the pay raises; a group even showed up to protest at the recent regents meeting. Another issue that has arisen is the practice of licensing the school logo (departments have to pay!) and using the money for athletics.

NKU–They are certifying all old general education courses into a new model.

U of L–Their head of Human Resources is being elevated to the V.P. level.

Minutes submitted by

Nancy McKenney, COSFL Secretary and ECU Rep.