

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

of the

BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Held at UW-Eau Claire in Davies Center
Thursday, October 4, 2001
10:30 a.m.

- President Smith presiding -

PRESENT: Regents Axtell, Boyle, Brandes, Burmaster, De Simone, Gottschalk, Gracz, Jones, Klauser, Krutsch, Marcovich, Mohs, Olivieri, Randall, Smith and Schneiders

ABSENT: Regent Barry

Introducing the meeting topics, Regent President Smith indicated that, as will be the pattern for the coming year, time had been set aside at the beginning of the two-day meetings for the Board of Regents to meet as a whole and focus attention on topics designated by the Board as high-priority areas: Educational excellence, economic development for Wisconsin, and building the UW's resource base.

The first topic for this meeting related to educational quality and had to do with retention, campus climate, and an update on Plan 2008 – Educational Quality through Racial and Ethnic Diversity. The second topic related to accountability for new initiatives provided in the Economic Stimulus Package approved in the budget.

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Plan 2008/Retention and Campus Climate

Presenting a panel discussion on this topic, Regent Boyle, Chair of the Education Committee, referred to the Fall 2001 Biennial Report on Plan 2008, which contained the most recent information on progress in achieving the plan's goals. Noting that there has been progress in many areas, Regent Boyle cited pre-college program participation that has already met the 10-year goal; annual increases in applications, admissions, and enrollments of new freshmen of color; and increasing diversity in faculty and staff.

Graduation rates for students of color, however, continued to lag behind those of white students. This means, Regent Boyle indicated, that the Education Committee will devote considerable attention to the subject of retention in the coming months.

Referring to a briefing paper titled “Campus Climate as a factor in Student Retention”, Regent Boyle introduced a panel discussion to expand on the issues presented in that paper.

The panelists were: Ms. Maiknue Moua, a senior at UW-Eau Claire. Ms. Moua, who is on the Dean’s List, is the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards. She is Chair and Executive Officer of the Hmong Student Association and Executive Officer of the Asian American Student Organization. She also participates in recruitment and orientation of new freshmen and is active in mentorship programs. The second panelist, Dr. Alicia Chavez, is the Dean of Students at UW-Madison. A native of New Mexico with an Hispanic and Native American background, she has extensive teaching, research and administrative experience in student affairs, business affairs, diversity issues and academic research. Her academic scholarship has focused on multiculturalism within student affairs and higher education, and she has published extensively in her field. She has taught in the areas of college student development, college student cultures, and diversity development and change in higher education. The third panelist was Dr. Richard Wells, Chancellor of UW-Oshkosh. He has taught for 18 years in his academic area of sociology and has published many scholarly articles. Prior to coming to Wisconsin, he served as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Indiana State University, where he coordinated a study of racial and national origin climate.

Ms. Moua began the discussion by referring to a handbook on enhancing diversity which states that campus climate comprises the culture, habits, decisions, practices and policies that make up campus life. It is the sum total of the daily environment and is essential to the comfort level of minority students, faculty and staff. UW-Eau Claire’s climate, she commented, has made her feel welcome and made possible her success.

As a freshman, her first priority was to succeed in the classroom. She then found that other doors opened for her and credited James Vance, Coordinator for Minority Programs, and Charles Vue, the university’s Southeast Asian Coordinator, with reaching out to her and helping her to attain positions of responsibility and build strong credentials. For example, she has presented awards at many banquets and hosted this year’s Multicultural Scholarship Banquet. She also was chosen as a Campus Ambassador, a position that gave her the opportunity to represent the university in numerous ways. Finally, she was nominated by the American Ethnic Coordinating Office and selected as UW-Eau Claire’s Woman of Color. Ongoing support by the Office, she said, created a daily environment that gave her a high level of comfort.

Other faculty, staff and administrators also recognized her accomplishments and reached out to her. Stating that her advisor, Dr. Sally Web, has been a very important part of her education, Ms. Moua said that through Dr. Web’s efforts she was nominated

for a scholarship and awarded \$5,500 this year. Dr. Web also facilitated her admission to a program in which she has been engaged in collaborative research with Dr. Susan Hafen on Hmong women leaders' roles and identities. Dr. Hafen's guidance and support resulted in a conference paper and possible publications. The support and encouragement provided by Dr. Web and Dr. Hafen created a comfortable environment for her and gave her the courage to attend graduate school and seek further opportunities.

She noted that not all of her friends have had similarly positive experiences and that not all had sought the assistance and made the connections that she had. For her success, she credited her parents, who value education and have been her strongest source of motivation, as well as all those at the university who created an environment in which she felt comfortable enough to succeed.

Ms. Moua expressed her belief that it is important for her to help other students find connections and use those connections to increase their opportunities. As a member of the Hmong Association, she has worked to create a supportive environment in order to recruit and retain Hmong students. The association provides mentors to incoming freshmen, as well as student panels to help them learn about all the resources available to them. She also has worked with the career services program to present information to high school and college students on making career decisions.

In conclusion, Ms. Moua said that the comfortable campus climate at UW-Eau Claire is created through the combined efforts of family, the American Ethnic Office, faculty, staff and administrators. She emphasized that it takes everyone working together to create a comfortable daily environment in which minority students, faculty, and staff can succeed on campus.

Dean Alicia Chavez began her presentation by indicating that low retention rates for students of color are not surprising because higher education's policies, procedures, structures, teaching methods and advising methods are constructed in a manner that is not natural for these students. Noting that multi-national corporations and the federal government highly trains employees how to work across language, culture and operational differences before they are allowed to work cross-culturally, in this country or abroad, she asked how well higher education prepares faculty, staff and decision makers to educate a widely diverse citizenry.

Student retention, she explained, is positively influenced primarily by two factors: First, a mentoring relationship with a faculty or staff member; and second, an overall feeling of belonging that fosters the ability of students to learn. The reasons for students of color leaving college are not primarily academic, she said. Rather, they leave because the college community does not feel like their own community and they do not feel like they belong there.

Dr. Chavez then identified four types of campus climate difficulties that students face: First, physical threats; second, verbal threats and harassment; third, put downs, such as assuming that an African American student is on campus for athletics or steering students of color towards less demanding academic fields; and fourth, invisibility – the feeling by students of color that their way of life is not present on campus. As examples of the latter, she cited the experience of Native American students reading a history book that misrepresents their history or the experience of Latino students, who were taught to learn primarily through discussion and practice, having to struggle to learn through a lecture format. Quoting a noted researcher on retention of students of color, Dean Chavez said that the feeling they have is like being “a guest in someone else’s house. It’s not your picture on the wall; they’re not serving the foods that you are used to and are not teaching in a way that is natural for you.”

Referring to the importance to society of retaining students of color, Dean Chavez stated that diversity fosters creativity. She pointed out that the nation’s population is diverse and that most corporations are either multi-national or serve a multi-ethnic clientele. In meeting with a number of employers last spring, she was advised that, while UW-Madison students were very competent academically, they often lacked the ability to work in diverse teams, across socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender. The main way students develop such skills, she explained, is through informal relations with other students across cultures in student organizations, residence hall living, and student government. Students of color, on the other hand, have much experience and a high skill level in working across cultures.

In conclusion, she emphasized the university’s responsibility to retain these students through graduation.

UW-Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells began his presentation by defining campus climate as the collective characteristics of an institution that affect the behavior and academic and professional performance of individuals and the community. A key feature of campus climate is shared perceptions held by students, faculty, administrators, and staff about various aspects of the campus. These perceptions are shaped by the institution’s historical legacy and location; institutional ideology; structure; socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural background; social interactions, and behavior of individuals in the university community. Therefore, campus climate varies significantly from one type of campus to another.

The main reason for studying campus climate, Chancellor Wells continued, is to improve the quality of life and education for all members of an academic community, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, national origin, and gender. Studies have shown that campus climate impacts significantly the decision of a student, faculty member or administrator to join, stay at, or leave an institution. Another reason for studying campus climate is that it has a significant impact on student satisfaction, performance, and retention. Noting that an institution’s knowledge of its climate

typically is based on anecdotes and personal experiences, he pointed out that this type of knowledge provides little evidence as to how climate is affecting the academic success of certain groups; the university's recruiting efforts; and how well the institution is preparing students for a world that is becoming increasingly diverse. A systematic and methodologically sound analysis of the campus climate, he stated, provides much better and more useful information.

Turning to the question of when to do a campus climate study, Chancellor Wells emphasized that the time to do a study is not when there is a high profile crisis on campus, which is when most such studies actually are done. Since climate is a variable and dynamic phenomenon, he explained, systematic climate studies should be conducted on a regular basis.

As to how to do a campus climate study, the Chancellor said that, first and foremost, such studies must be methodologically and conceptually sound, meeting social science journal publication standards. This is necessary for credibility within the academic community. Second, the study must be done in a broad-based way so that all community members are represented. Third, the study should include a variety of methodologies, such as surveys, focus groups, and secondary data analysis. Fourth, the study should ask questions that focus on everyone's experience and what they observe, such as: "Have you been discriminated against or observed others being discriminated against?" He noted that studies in which people of color report discrimination get more attention if majority group members also report witnessing discrimination against them and that the study also should find out if majority group members report being discriminated against. Finally, the study must be set up so that the campus climate can be effectively changed afterwards.

Chancellor Wells then discussed how the results of the study should be used to affect desired change. First, a study utilization plan should be developed in advance that includes a systematic strategy for thorough campus-wide distribution and discussion of the findings. Then the findings should be discussed, critiqued, and evaluated for ways to improve the climate.

Finally, he turned to potential outcomes if a decision were made to do a UW System climate study. First, there would be increased awareness throughout the UW System and individual campuses about climate and diversity. Second, it would lead to development of new initiatives to improve campus climate. Third, the results could be used to better refine, prioritize and implement the initiatives of Plan 2008 for each campus, which would lead to better educational value and quality of life for everyone; more equitable retention and graduation rates; and more successful recruitment.

In discussion following the presentation, Regent Axtell referred to disturbing figures in the briefing paper showing that 68% of white students but only 23% of students

of color feel that the campus climate is supportive. He asked what can be done to improve the situation.

Dean Chavez replied that there must be actual change by campus communities in the way they speak, teach, advise, etc. The disparity in perception, she observed, appears because white students feel comfortable and believe others feel the same way.

Hopeful signs for the future include students educating other students on climate issues. Faculty and staff trying to be more multicultural in their educational and student service approaches, and residence halls trying to make all students feel welcome. What is important, she said, is to have a plan and put it into operation.

Referring to a campus climate study done when he was at Indiana State University, Chancellor Wells said those in charge of the study worked to promote the notion that most climate problems are not intentional but they exist nonetheless. It is necessary to become aware and change. Changes made at Indiana State led to improved recruitment, retention and graduation of students of color. He suggested that universities should be leaders in doing these kinds of studies.

Noting that Plan 2008 recognizes the importance of student retention, Regent President Smith asked the panelists to suggest what is most important to effect positive change.

Ms. Moua asked that the Board support programs that help students of color, such as ethnic student offices.

Dean Chavez recommended creating reward systems to encourage cross-cultural skills, such as weaving accomplishments in this regard into the tenure process. Just adding programs, she added, will not be sufficient.

Chancellor Wells noted that Plan 2008 demonstrates the high priority the Board places on improvements in these areas. He asked that the Board maintain its commitment and that analyses of climate be done in a scholarly way in order to permeate the academic community. When awareness is raised, he said, people will respond.

Regent De Simone noted that he had served as a school principal in areas with high concentrations of students of color and that he had helped to create a UW scholarship program for people of color. He emphasized the importance of reaching students well before college age to build positive attitudes and skills that will lead to success in higher education.

Chancellor Keating added that a critical mass of people of color is needed on campus to create a welcoming climate.

Regent Mohs asked if, as pre-college programs that emphasize skill building begin to bear fruit, the campus climate will improve as students of color do better academically.

Chancellor Wells indicated that, if students feel comfortable, their academic skills will improve. When students of color leave the university, he noted, it usually is not the result of academic difficulty. Many do not feel a sense of belonging on campus.

Regent Mohs asked if people with higher GPAs leave at the same rate as people with lower GPAs.

Dean Chavez replied that students of color who are at the high end academically leave because they are recruited to go elsewhere. There also is loss at the lower end, where students tend to be from low income families and difficult backgrounds. The highest rate of loss is from first generation college students who lack support from family members who have gone through the college experience.

Regent Olivieri suggested that the Board pass a resolution stating commitment to dealing with campus climate problems and that indicators be developed in the area of campus climate to measure progress. He felt the resolution should include the expectation that campuses develop mentoring programs; that graduates be prepared for a diverse environment; and that support systems be proactive, including special support for first generation college students; and that the academic climate be focused on the student as a learner in order to help all students, including students of color.

Regent Krutsch asked if UW-Madison's academically challenging "People" pre-college program has resulted in higher retention rates for students completing the program.

Replying that the program has been successful, Dean Chavez remarked that it is hard for some students even to imagine going to college. Pre-college programs, she felt, are one of the best ways to help students see the connection between building skills and academic success.

In response to a question by Regent Burmaster, Dean Chavez indicated that employers stress the importance of life skills from a diverse learning environment. The university must be accountable, she said, for preparing students with those skills and for improving retention of people of color.

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Accountability for New Initiatives

In opening remarks, Regent President Smith noted that staff have been asked to prepare formats and criteria for measuring the campuses' achievement of the commitments made in seeking new state funding for economic stimulus. The UW, he

emphasized, must be accountable for the outcomes that were promised. Specific commitments were made to increase enrollments in high tech/high paying fields and to assist business and industry in various ways. UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee also committed to a series of outcomes in return for funding their initiatives. It is understood that some of the enrollment growth will take more than one biennium to materialize and that most of the funding will not be forthcoming until the next fiscal year. The report will come to the Regents for the first time in fall, 2002. It will track use of both dollars and enrollments and measure both against the outcomes promised by the campuses. He asked Associate Vice Presidents Frank Goldberg and Kathleen Sell to provide the Board with a framework for these reports.

Associate Vice President Goldberg indicated that overall FTE economic stimulus enrollments will grow by 2557 by 2002-03 and that each campus has adjusted its target accordingly. The System will reach 2680 FTE by 2004-05. Access will be provided to some high-demand programs that previously were capped.

Noting that campus plans are diverse, he said they reflect individual institutional strengths and regional needs. He referred to a chart of institutions and majors that indicated fields in which enrollment growth will occur at each institution. Explaining that the System already collects enrollment data by major, he said institutions also will furnish data on sub-majors and certificate programs in order to provide a complete picture.

Data will be provided showing the net enrollment increase across all programs in economic stimulus areas, including programs already in place and those being created or expanded.

Regent Krutsch noted that more than half of the projected enrollment increase is at UW-Milwaukee, and Dr. Goldberg indicated that those enrollments are part of the Milwaukee Idea. Accountability will be demonstrated for programs and enrollments on all campuses.

Associate Vice President Sell showed a grid on outcomes and measures that will be used to show accountability for each institution in the categories of enrollments, new/expanded programs, expanded access, meeting regional economic development and training needs, partnerships, and leveraging funds. Quantitative measures will be used in tracking outcomes. Data on outside funds and base reallocations will be included.

She referred to a list of detailed measures of outcomes for the Madison Initiative, which will include data and other information in the categories of faculty hires, maintaining affordability, student learning, and economic development.

These outcome reports, she said, which will show where the money is going, will be available to provide accountability evidence to the state by November, although much data will not be available until July.

Data on dollars and FTE faculty/academic staff will be specified by academic field involved in the workforce development initiative, recruitment of faculty and staff, advising, instructional technology, libraries, partnership and outreach, supplies and expenses, and research at the doctoral institutions.

Regent Mohs emphasized the importance of these efforts and the necessity of providing accountability for use of economic stimulus package funds.

Judith A. Temby, Secretary

