

MINUTES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE, BOARD OF REGENTS

Pyle Center
Madison, Wisconsin
September 4, 2003

Regent Olivieri convened the meeting of the Education Committee at 1:40 p.m. Regents Axtell, Burmaster, Davis, Mohs, Pruitt and Richlen were present. Regent Marcovich joined the meeting in progress.

1. Approval of the minutes of the June 5, 2003, meeting of the Education Committee.

It was moved by Regent Mohs, seconded by Regent Axtell, that the minutes of the June 5, 2003, meeting of the Education Committee be approved.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

2. Report of the Senior Vice President.

Regent Olivieri welcomed Representative Jennifer Shilling from the 95th Assembly District in La Crosse, and noted that her presence gave the Board an opportunity to express its interest in better communication and exchange between the UW System and the Legislature. He also signaled his intentions to make the Education Committee meetings as discussion-based as possible during his tenure as Chair.

He then turned the podium over to Senior Vice President Marrett, who covered several topics. First, she sketched out for the Committee the distinctiveness of the governance model in U.S. higher education. She observed that while the Board's responsibilities do not change that much from year to year, or even decade to decade, the higher education environment undergoes significant change. She also compared U.S. higher education to its older, European counterparts. She recounted how in the late middle ages at Bologna University, for example, student guilds—in contrast to lay boards—governed the university. Some of their rules included the prohibition against professors leaving the campus without the permission of the students and the requirement that they had to make a monetary deposit against their return, if permission were granted; also, professors were subject to a fine for “poor lectures!” She pointed to the system of shared governance, which makes the decision-making process in Wisconsin higher education a shared responsibility, owned by governing boards, faculty and academic staff, students, and others.

Second, she noted the ways in which the Regents, in concert with System Administration and the institutions, have overseen and will continue to oversee directions for the entire System, in such critical areas as program development and planning, enrollment planning and management, and faculty roles and development.

Finally, she offered her ideas about what themes should engage the Committee for the year, proposing that the Committee return to and refine the two overarching themes from last year: student success and quality. She suggested that the Committee re-emphasize its commitment to the *success of all students*, whatever their academic interests, social or economic background. She reiterated the Committee's commitment to both quantitative and qualitative indicators of success, noting that the former are captured each year in the Accountability Report but that the latter remain more difficult to assess. She also proposed that the Committee examine success against the backdrop of a world in

transition, focusing on how well the UW System prepares students in a variety of settings and for a variety of experiences (including global and international). Noting that the Quality piece of last year's agenda would be taken up by the Regent Study working group, she expressed her interest in substantial exchange between that group and the Education Committee around the topics of quality and student success.

3. Report on Regent Study Working Groups

To that end, Regent members of the working groups gave brief synopses of their meetings that morning. Regent Davis reported on the *Research and Public Service* Committee that she chairs. That committee adopted the mission to “*Harness our research and public service missions to raise the per capita income of the state of Wisconsin while enhancing the quality of education.*” She noted that her committee's work should intersect well with that of the Education Committee. The Committee plans to determine the needs of external stakeholders through visits with local business communities in 5 campus regions (Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Oshkosh, Superior and Madison).

Regent Mohs then reported on the activity of the *Redefining Quality* group, noting that the importance of the topic—to which the Education Committee devoted lots of meeting time last year—has been magnified by our budget circumstances. He noted that the group discussed the two audiences, internal and external, that the committee needed to bear in mind, and signaled several areas the committee would examine in greater depth, including the student-faculty relationship, and scholarship and research. Both standards and indicators would be examined, with the goal of anticipating deterioration in any given area before it was allowed to happen.

Regent Burmaster added that the committee hoped to articulate a *System definition for educational quality that focuses on student success*, and discussed at length the problem of how standards and indicators will be determined and by whom, for both the short term and the long term. It was observed that the annual accountability report will be very useful to this endeavor.

Regent Olivieri expressed his abiding concern that the System eschew any sort of formula for diminished quality (i.e., a formula that says that if the System goes below a certain number in terms of some quantifiable indicator, then quality will be irrevocably harmed). That, he continued, would be a short step away from reducing access, which is what—in both practical and philosophical terms—he wants to protect most. Regent Mohs emphasized his group's conclusion that its message had to be conveyed through stories—campus- or department-generated or faculty stories that speak directly to quality more than any numbers can. Regent Davis asked to go on record as saying that the System needs more indicators that address *climate*. Senior Vice President Marrett agreed and noted that her office is working to develop precisely this kind of process and information.

Regent Axtell, Chair of the *Revenue Authority* Committee, reported that his group would address the major areas from which the System's funding is derived, in order to explore what opportunities might exist for enhancement. Noting that the Board had little control over the GPR side of revenue, he did emphasize the need to communicate better to the Legislature that the UW System deserves its recognition and support. The research component—i.e., the \$700 million the System brings in as research money every year—must be preserved, above all by investing in the great faculty who teach and conduct research at the institutions. The tuition portion of the UW System's budget is where the committee will focus most of its attention by exploring the topics of differential tuition, per-credit tuition, cohort tuition, non-resident tuition, and the non-traditional student demographic. Regent Pruitt added that while the committee's focus is on *expanding* resources and revenues, it is mindful of the need to make sure that any expansion of resources is directed at preserving academic quality.

Regent Olivieri concluded this part of the discussion by asking for the Education Committee's input into the still-evolving agenda for the coming year, focused on the theme of student success.

4. Program Authorizations – First Reading.

M.S. in Physician Assistant Studies, UW-La Crosse

The Committee heard a first reading of a program in Physician Assistant Studies from UW-La Crosse. Provost Elizabeth Hitch gave an institutional overview of UW-La Crosse's program planning. She detailed La Crosse's careful planning and review process that focused on three factors: 1) accreditation requirements and standards; 2) the institution's regular process of program review, which involves both program improvement and, more recently, a consideration of the appropriateness of the campus's array; and 3) an Academic Planning Committee for New Programs, which looks at mission, demand, resources, opportunities for collaboration, delivery methods, etc. She mentioned that La Crosse does not try to be all things to all people, and that is reflected in its program planning and array.

The Committee also heard from Dean Stroud, Special Assistant to the Provost and a faculty member, who reported on the three aspects of La Crosse's decision-making process for program array: renewal of existing programs, new program creation, and elimination of non-essential programs. He highlighted the revitalization of the Physics Department from 5 to 120 majors in the last few years; the creation of an interdisciplinary German Studies Program; and the elimination of the Mass Communication major, which was popular but just not appropriate to the array at La Crosse.

The Committee then heard from Interim Associate Dean Karen Palmer McLean from the College of Science and Allied Health, who elaborated on the Physician Assistant Studies or PAS program before the Committee for a first reading. She described the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, and the University's participation in its efforts to address health care and work force issues through pooled resources and expertise. The PAS program attracts a highly competent student body, most of whom already have Bachelor's degrees when they enter. In essence, the students were earning a second bachelor's degree, so worthwhile and attractive was the program to them.

This program is in huge demand, Dean McLean explained, in part because of national changes in the allowable hours of medical residents. All hospitals and clinics are hiring more and more physician's assistants, to replace the coverage previously provided by residents. In fact, the PAS program involves an upgrading or transitioning of a B.S. program to a Master's program. In addition to the growing need for PA's, there is something else driving the change of the degree from a B.S. to an M.S.: changes in the accrediting body for PAS programs. Committee members expressed their concern with the extent to which accreditation organizations are dictating curricular and program changes.

Dean Mc Lean commented that, while these concerns are legitimate, they come too late: La Crosse has no choice but to change the degree to a Master's, if it wants to attract the best students. The students want the credential, and know that they need it. In this case, the B.S. degree already met the credit requirements, curriculum, and standards of an M.S. degree. It is already a strong and successful program, in partnership with Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation in La Crosse and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota. It is a model program, in fact, for System partnerships with other, private institutions. The program does not require new resources, and, because it will collect increased graduate tuition, it will actually generate additional program revenue to the tune of \$25,000 annually!

In the discussion that followed, Regent Davis asked for further information on how the program was meeting the System's diversity goals, both in terms of curriculum and student population. The question generated further discussion on science education at the k-12 level.

5. Report on 2002 Undergraduate Drop Rates.

The Undergraduate Drop Rate Report is annually required both by statute and by Board policy. As in past years, the goal that each institution not exceed a drop rate of five percent is met by every UW institution except the UW Colleges. The Committee heard from Colleges Provost Margaret Cleek on why this is, and what is being done to reduce the drop rate. Provost Cleek noted that the numbers are improving but given the Colleges' mission of access and the profile of its students—most of whom are in the bottom quartile of their high school classes and first-generation college students—the drop rate will probably always remain above five percent. She relayed information about the Colleges' first-year initiative and freshman seminar program, which are being implemented as widely as budget permits and with great potential to contribute to student success. Regent Burmaster called the Colleges a great success story, adding that she hopes the Colleges' statistics would soon reflect the improvements being made at the high school level. What the Colleges are doing, in terms of pedagogical method, she continued, is exactly what needs to be done at the high school level to improve student success and academic preparation for college.

I.1.d.: It was moved by Regent Davis, seconded by Regent Axtell, that, upon Recommendation of the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Board of Regents accepts the Annual Report on 2002 Undergraduate Drop Rates for submission to the Joint Committee on Finance.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

6. Blue Cross/Blue Shield Oversight and Advisory Committee Vacancy

Regent Olivier reminded the Committee that last April the Board of Regents approved a five-year plan for the use of funds from the conversion of Blue Cross & Blue Shield stock, the proceeds of which will go to the UW Medical School and the Medical College of Wisconsin. That plan was presented to the Board by the Oversight and Advisory Committee, which was formed one year ago by Regent approval to oversee the distribution of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield funds.

The Committee had before it an action item involving the approval of Dr. Susan Goelzer to fill a vacancy from the UW Medical School to the Oversight and Advisory Committee. Regent Olivieri commented that Dr. Goelzer was an outstanding choice with an extensive background in the public health arena. Dean Philip Farrell of the UW Medical School was present to assure the Committee that the Oversight and Advisory Committee learned a lot from its last appearance before the Board, last April. He reiterated that the funds from Blue Cross/Blue Shield were being transferred to the UW Foundation, and that no money would be used for any building purposes. He did note, however, that the Medical School still gravely needs a new building, and that while fund-raising was proceeding well, there was still a lot of ground that needed to be covered.

I.1.e.: It was moved by Regent Mohs, seconded by Regent Davis, that, upon recommendation of the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Board of Regents approves Dr. Susan Goelzer to fill the vacancy on the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Oversight and Advisory Committee.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

Resolutions I.1.d. and I.1.e. were referred as consent agenda items to the full session of the Board of Regents at its Friday, September 5, 2003 meeting.

Prior to adjourning, Regent Mohs asked that the Education Committee take up sometime during the year the topic of lagging academic achievement by male students, and the extent to which their numbers are down in college attendance and graduation. Senior Vice President Marrett informed the Committee that some information was being prepared on this topic by her office, and that she would pursue it further with the Regents.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.