

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

of the

BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Madison, Wisconsin

UW-Madison

Held in 1820 Van Hise Hall

Thursday, November 4, 2004

11:00 a.m.

- President Marcovich presiding-

PRESENT: Regents Axtell, Bradley, Connolly-Keesler, Burmaster, Davis, Gottschalk, Marcovich, McPike, Olivieri, Pruitt, Randall, Richlen, Rosenzweig, Salas, Smith and Walsh

ABSENT: Regent Gracz

INTRODUCTION OF MR. PU YU PANG

Regent President Marcovich introduced Mr. Pu Yu Pang who was visiting from the District Government of Shan Hi, China. He is an administrative officer who was spending six weeks with the Department of Administration. He was in attendance to accompany Assistant Vice President David Miller to the Physical Planning and Funding Committee meeting. Regent President Marcovich thanked him for visiting the Board of Regents.

PRESENTATION BY CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, ON THE ROLE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA HIGHER EDUCATION

Regent President Marcovich welcomed President Schneider and called on Senior Vice President Cora Marrett for introductory remarks.

Dr. Marrett began her comments by quoting words used by Dr. Schneider to introduce the recent publication, *Our Students' Best Work*: "As the national dialog about accountability and assessment continues, we believe it is essential to provide thoughtful and forceful leadership from within the academy to ensure that assessment and accountability practices focus on the student learning outcomes that are most important for today's students." Dr. Schneider, she pointed out, has been an impassioned voice in the quest for accountability, assessment and excellence in educational outcomes.

Noting that Dr. Schneider and the Association of American Colleges and Universities are well known in the landscape of higher education, she indicated that UW institutions hold membership in the organization and that the hope is to broaden such linkages as Dr. Schneider helps the UW consider directions for the system-wide initiative titled, "The Currency of the Liberal Arts."

Dr Schneider is a magna cum laude graduate of Mt. Holyoke College, a product of the University of London's Institute for Historical Research and the holder of a doctorate from Harvard University. She spent 10 years at the University of Chicago, where she directed a scholarly collaboration between that university and fifty colleges in the Midwest. She has taught at Boston University, Chicago State University, and DePaul University.

In opening remarks, Dr. Schneider referred to the AACU's current work, *Meeting Greater Expectations for Liberal Education*. It is a commitment, she said, owed to students and society to think about the role of higher education in a changing world and economy. She asked members of the board to share their thoughts about the liberal arts and their importance to student learning in the 21st century.

Regent Connolly-Keesler remarked that, in listening sessions throughout the state in the last year, business leaders had repeatedly commented on the importance of their employees having liberal arts degrees, adding that they could be trained by the company in the specifics of the business.

Regent Richlen commented that the value of a liberal arts education is not impressed on students. Most students, she thought, come to the university focused on career preparation and do not appreciate adequately the liberal arts courses that give them the ability to communicate effectively and think critically.

Regent Davis said that recognizing the value of liberal education should begin at the K-12 level and that a better connection in that area is needed between K-12 and higher education.

Regent Burmaster pointed out that a liberal education in the 21st century needs to be an international education, enabling students to communicate and operate in a global community.

Dr. Schneiders then outlined common goals of a liberal education:

- Intellectual development
- Ethical development to prepare students to deal with the ethical complexity of the world in which they live
- Preparation for citizenship in a diverse democracy and a diverse world
- Preparing students with the knowledge and skills needed to negotiate their relationship to a world infused with science, technology, numbers, history and many cultures
- Preparing students for participation in the world of work in a changing, dynamic and innovative economy

Noting that the design for liberal education on most campuses is only a century old, Dr. Schneiders explained that, in the 19th century, virtually everyone who came to college took a common core curriculum that was defined as liberal education. It was about a century ago, as the disciplines emerged and research universities became increasingly important to society, that a design was put in place for educational breadth in general studies and depth in a particular field of study or major.

Today, she commented, colleges have entered a time of historical change with all kinds of innovations, such as first-year experiences, service learning, undergraduate research, learning communities, links across disciplines and between professional and liberal arts courses, and a new emphasis on assessment and accountability. She believed that these types of changes are leading toward a remapping of the basic design for a good liberal education in the 21st century.

One of the reasons that the public has not yet been involved in these conversations is that campuses are still in the midst of a rethinking process that is proceeding with many islands of innovation but no clarity yet about the direction that will finally be taken.

As part of its continuing work in the liberal arts, the association held focus groups in three states – Oregon, Indiana, and Virginia – that included college-bound high school students, as well as focus groups of college students who were rising juniors and seniors. The purpose was to find out their thoughts about their own education and the outcomes they considered important.

By their ranking, the least important outcome was civic responsibility and orientation to public service. When asked why this is unimportant, it became clear that they did not have a rich concept of civic engagement and assumed it was a synonym for voting, about

which they had already learned. The second least important outcome for them was expanded cultural and global awareness and sensitivity. Also listed as unimportant were competency in computer skills, which they already have, and tolerance and respect for different backgrounds, which they believed they learned in high school. Just above that came values, principles and ethics.

The most important outcomes for these students were maturity and ability to succeed on one's own, time-management skills, strong work habits, self-discipline, and teamwork skills and ability to get along with different types of people.

These rankings, Dr. Schneider explained, showed that students are making the transition from having parents make decisions to being able to succeed on their own. They have an individualized notion of why they are in college – to prepare themselves for the broader world. They had not reached the understanding that it is important in a college education to learn how to negotiate one's perspective with that of others, which is an important work skill, as well as a civic skill. In addition, they did not rank communication skills as very important, although these are skills that are highly valued by employers.

Dr. Schneider then turned to research on what recent graduates wish they had spent more time on in college. The findings show that they wish they had spent more time on developing critical thinking skills, on oral and written communication skills and on tolerance of racial, ethnic and lifestyle differences, as well as working harder on self-discipline and time management.

While these graduates had more appreciation of liberal education outcomes, they still considered awareness of the need for public service and preparing for the global community as relatively unimportant outcomes for them. These findings, she noted, emphasize the disconnection between what the academy thinks is important versus what students believe is important to them.

Dr. Schneiders then turned to recommendations made by AACU in its *Greater Expectations* report about the liberal education students need for a complex and interdependent world. First, important outcomes of a good 21st century education need to be addressed across the board, not only in certain disciplines or in general education.

In dialog with the business community, civic leaders, school leaders, and colleges and universities across the country, the association developed the following recommendations as to the liberal education that students need for today's world.

- Intellectual and practical skills, including analytical skills, communication skills (including a second language), quantitative reasoning, interpreting information from a variety of sources, ability to work within complex systems and with diverse groups, intellectual agility and the ability to manage change, and the ability to transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgment and action.
- Knowledge of human culture and the natural world, including research experiences that provide a foundation in the ways that knowledge is gained. In addition to the arts, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, this includes

the values and histories underlying U.S. democracy. The association found it troubling that study of this nation's democracy is entirely elective in college curricula.

- Individual and social responsibility, because the integrity of a democratic society depends on citizens' sense of social responsibility and ethical judgment. Students should see themselves as coming to college not just to prepare for careers, but also to prepare for their role as citizens of a diverse democracy. They need to spend time thinking about the ethical implications of their choices and developing knowledge and respect for the complex histories and cultures of those in other parts of the world.

With regard to implementing the recommendations, Dr. Schneider referred to a matrix developed by one institution of goals for a liberal education across the curriculum, including the first-year experience, the major, and culminating work plus assessment. The intent is for every student to be conversant with:

- Analytical, contextual and holistic thinking
- Effective communication using multiple literacies and forms of expression
- Critical reflection/informed action as citizens, producers, and human beings
- Ethical action for local and global communities
- Integrative learning

These types of goals and recommendations, Dr. Schneider said, represent what the *Greater Expectations* report is pointing toward: a set of common commitments that are found on every campus in all parts of the country, so that students will know that these are the things for which they will be held accountable, whatever their majors, and for which universities will be accountable to their students and the nation.

She identified three things that the regents can do to significantly advance this initiative:

- 1) Make the Board of Regents the by locus of a discussion between the academy and the State of Wisconsin; for example, bringing to the table employers who want to hire people not simply trained in technical skills but who can also think their way through complex ethical questions. In this way, the board could become an important source of a greatly needed public dialog about what the university should be accountable for. Many of these concepts, she noted, already are incorporated in the board's accountability report. The framework could be strengthened by finding a way to measure whether student work actually demonstrates these skills, rather than simply sampling student opinion.
- 2) Engage the academic departments in the broad issue of important outcomes of 21st century education. In that regard, she thought that the academy has been hobbled by the notion that problems with undergraduate education can be solved mainly by fixing general education. Instead, every department needs to think

about how it will take responsibility for broad outcomes, as well as specific outcomes.

- 3) Move away from the notion of making comparisons with others. Instead, she felt that the UW System is poised to take leadership for the nation in setting forth new ways of accountability for these kinds of learning

In conclusion, she expressed the goal of aiming for a situation in which, wherever students go to school, all of them can describe why they are in college with the vision and understanding of their role as people preparing for work, for citizenship and developing as human beings that characterizes liberal education at its best.

Commenting that the presentation was very challenging and motivating, Regent Axtell thought it particularly important that students develop a deeper understanding of the world they will inherit. In that regard, Wisconsin is fortunate to have Superintendent Burmaster's emphasis on developing appreciation for other cultures in the K-12 system. He also asked if the association's recommendations addressed the critical need for life-long learning.

While that matter was not addressed directly, Dr. Schneider said it could be assumed that, if the student emerges from college with intellectual skills, curiosity about the wider world and a sense of responsibility to others, that the foundation for life-long learning has been laid. She agreed that it would be desirable to make this goal more manifest.

With regard to the matter of values addressed in the focus groups, Regent Rosenzweig asked if students thought that they came to the university with a set of values already formed or if they considered it inappropriate for the university to deal with those issues.

Dr. Schneider replied that the students believed that their values were formed at home and were not necessarily to be examined in college. There was no understanding that in college they would be encountering other people's values and that they would need to engage values and perspectives different from their own. They did not say, however, that they thought it inappropriate for the university to address these matters. Research at Grinnell College showed that students tend to talk about difficult questions only when they know what they believe and want to persuade others. If they did not know what to think, they tended to fall silent. She felt that liberal education should prepare students not only to defend their positions, but also to engage respectfully with other people's positions and values. That kind of silence around hard questions, she observed, is an issue for democracy and one in which higher education has a contribution to make.

Referring to the chart Dr. Schneider had provided on what recent graduates wish they had studied more in college, Regent Pruitt asked Dr. Schneider to comment on some of the differences between university and liberal arts college graduates, noting that university graduates were much more interested in training for specific careers, while liberal arts graduates favored more training in critical thinking and foreign languages.

Dr. Schneider indicated that she had not been involved in that research but would hypothesize that the differences reflected emphases of the colleges and universities that which graduates wished they had used to better advantage.

Regent Walsh remarked that he strongly supports liberal education and that employers want diversity, not only in culture and race or ethnicity, but also in education. He asked how the association had utilized the focus group results to reach its conclusions.

In reply, Dr. Schneider explained that the *Greater Expectations* report emerged from dialog with business and civic leaders, as well as colleges and universities around the country. The focus groups were conducted separately as preparation for a public dialog about liberal education. It is the association's belief that the recommendations made in the report represent a virtual consensus within the academy about important outcomes for 21st century education.

Noting that there is evidence that the public does not necessarily share these views, she explained that research done in 2000 found an overwhelming public view that the reason for going to college is to prepare for careers. Only 63% thought analytical and problem-solving skills are important outcomes; only 57% thought communication skills are important; and only about 43% considered civic engagement to be important.

Regent President Marcovich commented that, in the experience of his law firm, the most successful employees have been those with the broadest education.

Dr. Schneider indicated that students in the focus groups said that they got their best advice about college from siblings and friends. They have not been hearing the message that employers are interested in hiring people with a broad education.

Regent Marcovich suggested that it would be helpful to have employer mentoring of students, beginning at the high school level, and Dr. Schneider agreed that such mentoring would be a very beneficial contribution to student understanding.

Regent Davis commented that the public view may be based on an outdated definition of jobs and the kinds of skills they require, rather than on the jobs of the future in a global world. Part of the challenge, she felt, will be to educate the public as to the role of the liberal arts in making the nation competitive for jobs and a stable economy in the years ahead.

Dr. Schneider concurred, noting that it is not enough to add one required course to the curriculum as a way of teaching diversity at home and abroad. Instead, she suggested that students need to start this learning in the K-12 schools so that, when they get to college, they can do higher level work on global subjects, including work in their majors.

Regent Burmaster pointed out that Wisconsin is one of the only states that has a PK-12 curriculum guide designed to infuse a global perspective into every discipline.

With regard to civic responsibility and orientation to public service, President Reilly noted that Wisconsin is a campus-compact state, due to leadership by Chancellor Keating of UW-Parkside. Volunteer activities related to public service and service learning are on the rise and perhaps as high as they ever have been. He asked how this situation

squares with the focus group finding that orientation to public service is last on the list of important outcomes.

Dr. Schneider thought that, although service learning is strong, many students are not yet being reached with that message.

Concluding the discussion, Regent President Marcovich thank Dr. Schneider for her very interesting and thought-provoking presentation.

Senior Vice President Marrett emphasized that Wisconsin is in a leadership position in this area and wants the rest of the nation to know what is taking place here.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon, upon motion by Regent Davis, seconded by Regent Gottschalk.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. A. Temby", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Judith Temby, Secretary