

MINUTES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE, BOARD OF REGENTS
University of Wisconsin-Superior
Superior, Wisconsin
October 7, 2004

Regent Olivieri convened the meeting of the Education Committee at 1:00 p.m. Regents Olivieri, Axtell, Burmaster, Davis, Gracz, and Richlen were present.

1. Approval of the minutes of the September 9, 2004, meeting of the Education Committee.

I.1.a. It was moved by Regent Burmaster, seconded by Regent Axtell, that the minutes of the September 9, 2004, meeting of the Education Committee be approved.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

2. Follow-up Discussion: All-Regent Session on the Legislative Audit Bureau Audit

The Committee engaged in follow-up discussion of the Legislative Audit Bureau Report presented earlier in the day by Jan Mueller, the State Auditor. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Ms. Mueller for taking the time to travel to Superior and explain the report's major findings. Regents Axtell and Davis noted Jan Mueller's confirmation of something they had each read in the media: that the percentage of costs the UW System spends on administration is consistent with other state agencies and with non-profits. For example, the Department of Natural Resources spends 16 percent of its budget on administrative costs, compared to the UW System's 15 percent. Regent Davis indicated her concern with the lack of public understanding about the appropriateness of the UW System's practice of benchmarking administrative counts according to higher education peers, a practice with which the Audit concurred. Initial coverage of the report in the media suggested that the UW System had been deliberately deceptive and dishonest, which was not in the Audit findings at all. The Committee agreed that the Board and the UW System need to counter that perception with the public and the media. Regent Olivieri asked that Senior Vice President Marrett keep the Education Committee apprised of those areas of the Audit that are relevant to the work of the Committee and that require further attention.

3. Report of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

a. Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Report and Institutional Report on General Education, UW-Superior

UW-Superior presented to the Education Committee reports on its 2003 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation and its General Education Program, both required by Regent policy. In introducing UW-Superior Provost David Prior, Senior Vice President Cora Marrett reminded the Committee of the distinction between regional institutional accreditations (like that performed by HLC, the accrediting arm of North Central Accreditation [NCA]), as opposed to professional accreditation reviews (like those in programs like Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy). Accreditation, she noted, requires collective assessments of institutions and everyone—including the Board of Regents—has a role to play. She suggested that, in hearing these institutional reports, the Board should keep in mind the challenges of designing coherent curricula for increasingly mobile student populations. General Education programs, for example, should be designed to assess students

on the basis of specific learning outcomes, as a meaningful and integrated component of their whole education, and not as a random collection of credit hours.

Provost David Prior then described the accreditation process at Superior, which resulted in a renewal of the university's accreditation for ten years. He informed the Committee that UW-Superior requested from the accreditors a "special emphasis review" of the institution's liberal arts mission. That review resulted in a request by HLC for a progress report in 2006 on how well Superior is doing in matching its mission to its curricular offerings and to the assessment of student learning. Observing that UW-Superior is not a Bowdoin or a Grinnell, but, rather, a public liberal arts university with an abiding commitment to providing access, Dr. Prior also noted that HLC seemed to appreciate UW-Superior's efforts to be self-critical and the complexity of its mission. In response to the HLC report, Superior is developing several task forces, each of which is designed to address particular findings of the report. The institution is also working on several feasibility studies to see what can be implemented, given budget and personnel restraints, and how best to align budget allocations with efforts to fulfill the Superior Liberal Arts Model. The Committee asked that UW-Superior report back in a year on the progress being made in this area.

Provost Prior also reported on the activities underway to reform UW-Superior's General Education program, in particular through a variety of assessment activities, including efforts to survey students and faculty on how well students are meeting learning outcomes in hard-to-assess areas like citizenship. Regent Olivieri asked what role the Board might play as it hears these kinds of required accreditation and general education reports. Provost Prior responded that the Board can reaffirm the need for institutional commitments to General Education programs. He admitted that faculty and students do not always value General Education; they view it as a part of the education that should just be gotten out of the way as quickly as possible. Yet, General Education courses are foundational and can account for almost half of students' credits towards their degrees, making it too important a component to be dismissed by faculty and students. The Committee congratulated UW-Superior on the ten-year renewal of its accreditation and its efforts to reform General Education.

Regent Burmaster reported that the PK-16 Council is undertaking a citizenship initiative and she expressed her interest in the more systematic collection of data on some of these core learning outcomes like citizenship. Chancellors Bruce Shepard of UW-Green Bay, and Jack Miller of UW-Whitewater responded that the institutions do collect such data, as does NSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement. Some data is contained in the annual institutional Accountability Reports. Senior Vice President Marrett suggested that her office looks for ways to develop more systematic approaches to such data collection.

b. "Measures, Benchmarks and Accountability: As Viewed on the Way Out" – Farewell Remarks by Associate Vice President Frank Goldberg

The Committee heard farewell remarks from Frank Goldberg, UW System Associate Vice President for the Office of Policy Analysis and Research. Dr. Goldberg is leaving System to take a position as Vice Provost for Resource Planning and Management at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He addressed the challenges posed by the UW System's efforts to hold itself and its institutions accountable, and the difficulty in developing effective measures and benchmarks that are fair to the institutions, yet establish high expectations and desired results. Data, he declared, was limited in the stories it tells, and the performance measures used by System can be restrictive and not necessarily measure student success. Among the other points he made, were: 1) that, while the UW System might want to conduct accountability reports that are focused inward on continuous institutional improvement, it is required to report to external constituents; 2) that, some of the performance

measures designed by System do not probe adequately nor allow for sufficient complexity; and 3) that, benchmarks are important but it remains critical to acknowledge that comparisons among System institutions can be invidious, especially in the area of two-year retention and six-year graduation rates.

Associate Vice President Goldberg shared data with the Committee that explained why institutions should be evaluated according to student population and mission, citing the examples of UW-Parkside and UW-Madison with their distinct missions, student populations, and, hence, retention and graduation rates. Dr. Goldberg also explained that six-year graduation rates count only new, full-time Fall freshman, but that students enter the university at lots of other moments. Students might graduate with a certain class but they are not counted in that class's graduation rates if they were not in the new freshman fall class of any given year. Likewise, other students will have a successful beginning at a UW System institution but graduate elsewhere and, therefore, not be included in any UW System data on successful completion. He acknowledged that it will always be necessary to have standard benchmarks by which to evaluate institutional performance. However, he cautioned, in order to get better analysis, it is necessary to dig deeper and develop measures that allow for the full complexity of what the data can hide. The individual, institutional accountability reports that accompany the System report each February do give more detailed analysis. But, he continued, there is always the danger that institutions will be punished for numbers that do not look good and they are wary of that.

Dr. Goldberg concluded that the goal is to develop data that correspond to institutional mission, that measure improvement over time, and that use appropriate external benchmarks. Regent Olivieri reminded the Committee of his inclination to increase goals and set the bar higher whenever improvement is seen. He acknowledged, however, that that may not be the appropriate response given Dr. Goldberg's comments. In closing, Dr. Goldberg stated that it is impossible to say what the right numbers are, whether for administrative costs, credits-to-degree, or graduation rates. There is value in measuring an institution solely against itself. Regent Burmaster pointed to the disastrous situation in which K-12 finds itself with its invidious comparison model, and good schools being labeled as "failing."

The Committee thanked Dr. Goldberg for all his contributions to the UW System and noted how much he would be missed.

4. Program Authorizations – Second Readings

Before turning to the program authorizations, Regent Olivieri asked for follow-up on several items from the September Committee meeting. He requested that the Committee be briefed on the rationale for the research and public service monies allocated in the September Research and Public Service Report. In response to his question about System's preparation of a list of reporting requirements that might be terminated, Senior Vice President Marrett replied that System will pilot its request for an end to certain reporting requirements with the Annual Drop Report the Committee approved last month (a report which has clearly outlived its purpose). A letter is being prepared for Regent President Marcovich to send to the Joint Finance Committee requesting the policy change.

The Committee then heard second readings of the two programs presented in September: the B.A./B.S. in Multimedia Digital Arts at UW-Whitewater; and the M.S. in Occupational Therapy at UW-La Crosse. The Committee reiterated its satisfaction that both programs met clear market demand, were working to be collaborative with other UW and WTCS institutions, and would be funded primarily through reallocation. The Committee approved the Multimedia Digital Arts program with little discussion.

I.1.d.(1): It was moved by Regent Axtell, seconded by Regent Gracz, that, upon recommendation of the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Chancellor be authorized to implement the B.A./B.S. in Multimedia Digital Arts, UW-Whitewater.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

The Occupational Therapy program at La Crosse elicited much discussion. Senior Vice President Marrett reminded the Committee that the program entailed an upgrade from a Bachelor of Science to a Master of Science because of changes in accreditation requirements. UW-La Crosse made a compelling case at the program's first reading in September for why the upgrade to the master's level was beneficial, and even necessary, yet the Committee still had some remaining questions. The Committee asked for and received additional information on the program, including reassurance that the program is making good-faith efforts to expand the diversity of its student body through contact with UW-Milwaukee and other institutions.

Regent Olivieri expressed his reservation that the credits-to-degree required by the program are too extensive, and therefore adversely impact the time-to-degree. Observing that other OT programs elsewhere take only two years, both Regents Olivieri and Davis persisted in questioning whether the program should take two and one-half years and would be too expensive for students. Karen Palmer McLean, the Associate Dean of the College of Science and Allied Health at UW-La Crosse, explained to the Committee that the UW-La Crosse OT program, in contrast to others, incorporates into its curriculum certain core courses that other programs require as prerequisites and, therefore, do not list as part of their required credits-to-degree. The La Crosse program further expects that most of its graduates will be practicing in rural areas without the benefit of larger support networks like one would find in Madison or other cities with hospitals, hence the need for additional coursework. Senior Vice President Marrett added that, given the La Crosse program's focus on clinical preparation of graduates (in contrast to the Madison OT program's focus on research preparation), the additional credits-to-degree seemed appropriate to her Office and in alignment with national standards.

Regent Olivieri asked that the program agree to re-evaluate in the next few years the required credits- and time-to-degree. Reminding the Committee that all programs approved by the Board undergo a five-year joint review with UW System Administration, Senior Vice President Marrett assured Regent Olivieri and others that the concerns raised would be considered as part of that process. Dean McLean also assured the Committee that La Crosse would be investigating more dual-degree options, in addition to one the OT program already participates in, as a means of helping students move through faster, and getting more OT practitioners out into the world, where there is much demand for them. Regent Gracz expressed his belief that La Crosse was being appropriately responsible in addressing the Committee's concerns and asked that the program be accorded a vote.

I.1.d.(2): It was moved by Regent Gracz, seconded by Regent Burmaster, that, upon recommendation of the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Chancellor be authorized to implement the M.S. in Occupational Therapy, UW-La Crosse.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

The remainder of the Committee's discussion centered on steps the Board might take to express its concern with "accreditation creep." Occupational Therapy is not the only field where the

professional accreditation agency mandates curricular and degree changes. In September, the Committee was urged to take leadership on this issue by communicating as a Board with other higher education boards, accreditation agencies, and the federal government, where appropriate, to express its position on mandated changes that are unnecessary, expensive, and ultimately harmful to students. The Committee asked Senior Vice President Marrett to prepare a resolution and some documentation arguing against accreditation creep and, in particular, the potential requirement of a doctorate in Occupational Therapy as the entry-level degree for clinical practice. At Regent Burmaster's recommendation, however, the request of Dr. Marrett and her staff was redirected. Regent Burmaster suggested a general survey of the allied health and medical professional fields, in which it appears that accreditation demands are rising in ways that seem increasingly unreasonable. A more comprehensive review of the terrain—of agency pressures, of the national and regional contexts—would allow the Committee to proceed in a more responsible and informed manner with any action it might want the Board to take. Senior Vice President Marrett assured the Committee that it would receive this survey in the next 60 days.

5. Authorization to Recruit: Provost and Vice Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee

I.1.e. It was moved by Regent Richlen, seconded by Regent Axtell, that the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee be authorized to recruit for a Provost and Vice Chancellor, at a salary range within the Board of Regents salary range for university senior executive salary group four.

The resolution PASSED unanimously.

Resolutions I.1.a, I.1.d.(1), I.1.d.(2), and I.1.e. were referred as consent agenda items to the full session of the Board of Regents at its Friday, October 8, 2004, meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.