

MINUTES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE, BOARD OF REGENTS
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin
December 8, 2005

Regent Axtell convened the meeting of the Education Committee at 1:45 p.m. Regents Axtell, Semenas, and Spector were present.

1. Deferral of the approval of the minutes of the November 10, 2005, meeting of the Education Committee

Because the Education Committee did not have a quorum of voting members, approval of the minutes from the November 10, 2005, meeting was deferred until the February, 2006, meeting.

2. Follow-up Discussion: All-Regent Session on Financial Aid and Tuition

The Committee engaged in follow-up discussion of the morning session on financial aid and tuition. Regent Axtell recognized David Glisch-Sanchez from the United Council of Wisconsin Students who asked that, as the Regents proceed in revising the UW System's financial aid and tuition policy, they keep in mind the Lawton and the AOP grant programs since the research shows that a significantly greater percentage of minority families in Wisconsin are living below the poverty level compared to white families. He also encouraged Regents to keep in mind the maximum caps placed on federal loans available to students, which have a real impact on, especially, middle-income students.

The Committee discussed further the need to expand UW System admissions practices to look at students in what Senior Vice President Cora Marrett termed a more "holistic" fashion, to consider the experience and background of individual students in terms of what they might contribute to an incoming class of freshman, in addition to ACT and SAT scores, grade point averages, and class rank. UW-Madison Interim Provost Gina Sapiro noted that this was the practice already at UW-Madison, as the campus seeks to ensure equity of access and a more diverse and more qualified class of applicants. UW-Parkside Provost Rebecca Martin described the challenge at UW-Parkside to help prospective students and families understand that college is possible. In response to a question from Regent Axtell, UW-Milwaukee Provost Rita Cheng replied that one of UW-Milwaukee's strategies was to work with high school counselors and provide them with good information on affordability, access, and the admissions process. UW-River Falls Provost Ginny Coombs described her institution's efforts to build relationships with regional high schools. The Committee discussed the extent to which constrained resources made such admissions practice more difficult, but observed as well that the efforts to create diverse student bodies and equity in terms of access were goals shared across the System. Senior Vice President Marrett assured the Committee that all UW institutions were discussing how they could make their admissions practice more holistic in the future.

Regent Axtell asked the Chancellors and Provosts attending the meeting to further remark on a comment made earlier in the day by Regent Loftus, concerning the perception by legislators that the UW System is elitist. Given the fact that 73 percent of Wisconsin legislators are apparently graduates of UW schools, he asked how the System should try to combat this perception. UW-Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells observed that, in his experience, people love UW-Oshkosh but not the UW System, which remains an abstraction to people and hence an easy target for criticism. Provost Cheng noted that UW-Milwaukee and UW-Parkside, in particular, have very different profiles in terms of student population and local community. UW-Eau Claire Interim Provost Steve Tallant recounted a conversation he had had with a wealthy Eau Claire alumnus, who lamented that he would not be admitted to UW-Eau Claire if he had to apply today, given the

institution's higher standards. Such perceptions might explain, he noted, the perception of elitism. Regent Axtell observed that the UW System has no lobbying organization, like teachers, road-builders and the tavern-owners do, and that the responsibility for clearing up misperceptions on the part of legislators and the public falls to Regents as well as those who work at UW institutions and at System.

3. Report of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

a. Cultivating Excellence: the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Challenging Undergraduate Experience

Senior Vice President Marrett prefaced her report by noting that Wisconsin benefits from UW graduates not just because of the income they will earn but, just as importantly, because they will be quality citizens with potential to impact and benefit society broadly. She then introduced Gina Sapiro, Interim Provost at UW-Madison. Provost Sapiro described for the Committee the kinds of challenging academic enrichment experiences UW-Madison provides for its undergraduates, through such programs as study abroad, residential learning communities, and the integration of hands-on research into the undergraduate curriculum. She emphasized the extent to which such programs facilitate student development of knowledge, skills, creativity and love of learning. These programs have been implemented and increased as part of a coordinated and carefully developed strategic plan undertaken since the early 1990s to transform the way UW-Madison educates undergraduates. UW-Madison's goal, she stated, is to nurture its most vulnerable, and stretch its most advanced students through participation in a variety of programs. In the last academic year, approximately 80 percent of all UW-Madison undergraduates participated in one or more academic enrichment program. Provost Sapiro expressed the institution's pride in this participation rate, especially in light of the research finding that one of the biggest contributors to student success is engagement in an academic enrichment program.

In response to a question from Regent Spector, Provost Sapiro noted that all UW campuses had similarly strong programs. The Committee then heard from other Provosts in attendance about academic enrichment programs at their institutions that are tailored to the strengths of their faculty, curricula, and missions. Provost Coombs noted that eroding staff bases and constrained budgets did not make providing such quality programs easy given how labor-intensive enrichment programs are. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the System's faculty and staff, who are extremely dedicated to students and who develop and lead such programs because of the intrinsic rewards to themselves, as well as their students.

b. Review of the 2007-09 Sabbatical Guidelines and Announcement of the 2006-07 Sabbatical Assignments

Noting that the prior comments provided the perfect segue into the next topic, Senior Vice President reminded the Committee that each December it reviewed the announcement of sabbatical assignments. This year, it would also review the biennial Sabbatical Guidelines. She next reviewed for the Committee the vital role played by the sabbaticals program in maintaining the quality of UW System institutions by renewing the vibrancy of the teaching and scholarship of its faculty. She described sabbaticals as a highly effective tool in keeping UW System institutions competitive when recruiting and retaining quality faculty members, observing that, without sabbaticals, UW campuses would be at an enormous competitive disadvantage given that virtually all institutions of higher education in the United States, both public and private, offer sabbaticals.

Senior Vice President Marrett further explained that the program was highly competitive at each institution, that sabbaticals were not automatic, and that each project was reviewed by the Provost. She reported that the number of sabbaticals awarded has been stable over the last few years, and that the program

was largely self-funded through the salary savings generated by full-year leaves. She clarified that there was no separate pot of sabbatical money, noting that the campuses worked hard to maintain this essential program, which at this point in time and budget climate, is one of the few professional development programs the UW System is able to provide for its faculty. The Committee was informed that at the end of their sabbaticals, professors were required to produce reports describing the work undertaken.

Senior Vice President Marrett then reviewed with the Committee the Sabbatical Guidelines for 2007-09. The purpose of the biennial guidelines is to enable the Board to recommend priorities for sabbatical decisions without continually revising its sabbatical policy. At the last review in February 2004, the Education Committee asked institutions to continue to give consideration to proposals that: (1) support the mission of the faculty member's institution; (2) emphasize interdisciplinary scholarship; (3) promote collaborative activities; (4) enhance international education; (5) promote the application of technology to instruction and distance education; or (6) reflect the Board's commitment to promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning. The Committee agreed that it was comfortable with Senior Vice President Marrett's recommendation that the Board retain the existing emphases, since they still obtain to Regent goals and priorities.

In discussion, Regent Axtell expressed his admiration for the "treasure chest" of projects presented in the sabbatical abstracts, and Regent Spector for the substantive, educational topics being undertaken for in-depth study by faculty who would subsequently benefit students with their enhanced knowledge. In response to a question from Regent Spector, several Provosts explained the review and monitoring of the sabbaticals program at their institutions. Provosts also mentioned the kinds of benefits that accrue to students and the institutions as the result of faculty sabbaticals. A question from Regent Semenas about Hmong-American initiatives described in one sabbatical proposal elicited discussion and elaboration from several Provosts on institutional and community-based partnerships being undertaken to address the needs of this growing Wisconsin population.

The meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.