

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 10, 2005
11:00 a.m.

- President Walsh presiding -

PRESENT: Regents Axtell, Bradley, Burmaster, Connolly-Keesler, Crain, Davis, Gracz, Loftus, McPike, Pruitt, Rosenzweig, Salas, Semenas, Smith, Spector, and Walsh

ABSENT: Regent Randall

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DISCUSSION OF REGENT MEETING IMPROVEMENTS

Regent President Walsh introduced the topic by noting that a committee, chaired by Regent Connolly-Keesler, had been looking into possible ways to make Regent meetings more effective and efficient. At the last meeting she reported on a conversation with Tom Ingram, President of the Association of Governing Boards, regarding suggestions that he made based on his knowledge of board practices nationally.

President Reilly observed that any meeting cycle can be effective and that what works best depends on the unique circumstances of each board. Currently, the UW System Board meets more than any of its peers, totaling 20-22 meeting days per year, compared to a range of 4 to 20 for other boards. In that regard, he pointed out that planning for meetings displaces time that could be spent on in-depth analysis of issues. Any changes, he noted should serve to increase the transparency of the board's operations.

Regent President Walsh added that, based on today's discussion, staff would develop suggestions for Board consideration.

Regent Connolly-Keesler reported that she had shared with Mr. Ingram a survey of Regents and others that had been conducted last summer as to their views on possible changes. Any revisions to the meeting schedule, she noted, would not take place until after the end of the current fiscal year.

Referring to Mr. Ingram's suggestion that the number of meetings be reduced, Regent Connolly-Keesler indicated that this would be difficult, given the number of agenda items that come before the Board, but that one possibility would be to combine the March and April meetings. If the Board wished to reduce the number of meetings, she thought that the Executive Committee and perhaps other standing committees would need to meet in order to ensure that business could continue to be conducted in a timely way.

Other suggestions included:

- Having more meetings on UW campuses around the state. Noting that Regents very much appreciate the opportunity to visit campuses, she cautioned, however, that it would be important to hold down costs.
- Issue driven agendas, with all discussions focused around key issues.
- Think-time for the Board to brainstorm about important issues. She suggested that this might occur from 10:30 to noon on Thursdays, taking the place of presentations that are sometimes made in that time slot.
- The importance was emphasized of having dinner with the chancellors and having the opportunity to converse outside of a meeting setting.
- Focus on three-year goals.
- Increased use of the Executive Committee. Noting that this possibility received a mixed response in the survey, she indicated that Mr. Ingram suggested that the full Board ratify Executive Committee actions at the next meeting and that two seats on the Executive Committee should change membership every year.

In conclusion, Regent Connolly-Keesler emphasized that it is the effectiveness of the Board and what it does that matters, rather than the number of meetings.

Regent President Walsh explained that he had not been making use of the Executive Committee in an effort to make the Board's work as transparent as possible. His preference would be to have actions taken at full Board meetings with the public in attendance.

Regent Davis expressed her support for visiting UW the campuses more frequently.

In response to a question by Regent Davis, Regent Connolly-Keesler explained that Mr. Ingram suggested that the role of the Executive Committee include supervision of the System President, setting of the agenda for Regent meetings and dealings with routine issues.

Regent Axtell added that such routine items might include state-mandated reports, such as the annual gift-in-kind report.

Regent Crain commented that, as a new Regent, frequent meetings helped her in learning about issues and strengthening relationships with her new colleagues, which in turn helped her to better represent the university to others. She also expressed support for more frequent visits to campuses.

Regent Smith, who serves on the Board of Regents as President of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board, noted that the WTCS Board had moved from six to nine meetings per year and from one-day to two-day formats. Agendas rotate between routine matters and focus on specific issues. Five meetings per year are held outside of Madison and four in Madison.

Regent Bradley stated that he did not favor reducing the number of meetings or granting more authority to the Executive Committee. He observed that the Regents are knowledgeable and engaged and that they accepted the time commitment involved in serving on the Board.

Regent Pruitt asked how topics are identified for all-Regent sessions. In reply, President Reilly noted that all-Regent sessions on Thursday morning were added because Regents asked for more time to consider big issues, even if action on them might not be imminent. Presentations have been designed to facilitate such discussions. Some topics have been identified in Regent meetings or suggested by committee chairs. Others emerged from discussions with chancellors and in cabinet meetings. Regent President Walsh added that Board officers and committee chairs receive proposed agendas for their review.

Regent Connolly-Keesler asked if strategic planning is used in setting agendas, and Regent President Walsh replied in the affirmative, adding that there also has been the need to make budget cuts and deal with other matters that have become subjects of legislative and public attention.

Regent Salas pointed out that projects reviewed by the Physical Planning and Funding Committee are complex and that recommendations must go from the Board to the Building Commission. Based on Building Committee action, it may be necessary for the Committee to revisit projects and make adjustments. He feared that, if the Board met less often, it could not respond as effectively as it should. Therefore, he supported continuing the current meeting schedule and also visiting campuses more frequently.

Regent President Walsh asked staff to identify routine matters that could go to the Executive Committee for action. Given all the difficult issues before the Board, he could not envision meeting less frequently, but understood the difficulties in terms of staff time and effort required. In that regard he asked staff to identify ways to lessen the strain of frequent meetings.

The discussion concluded and the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Submitted by:

Judith A. Temby, Secretary

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