

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

of the

BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

LaCrosse, Wisconsin

UW-LaCrosse
Held in the Cartwright Center
December 4, 2008
10:00 a.m.

- Regent President Bradley presiding -

PRESENT: Regents Jeffrey Bartell, Mark Bradley, Elizabeth Burmaster, Judith Crain, Mary Cuene, Danae Davis, Michael Falbo, Thomas Loftus, Kevin Opgenorth, Charles Pruitt, Brent Smith, Michael Spector, Colleene Thomas, and Betty Womack

UNABLE TO ATTEND: Regents Eileen Connolly-Keesler, John Drew, José Vásquez and David Walsh

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UW SYSTEM CLIMATE STUDY

In opening remarks, UW System President Kevin Reilly noted that the campus climate survey was designed to assess how well participating campuses were meeting the goals of providing an inclusive, supportive learning and employment environment for students, faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds.

The campus climate assessment was piloted at five institutions – UW-La Crosse, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Stevens Point and the UW Colleges' 13 campuses. Next spring four more institutions will participate – UW-Eau Claire, UW-Parkside, UW-River Falls, and UW-Whitewater. The assessment involves a comprehensive survey distributed to all students, staff and faculty, featuring wide-ranging questions about campus life related to academic success, job satisfaction, the general campus environment, etc.

This study must be done, the President said, because it is imperative to expand the educational pipeline to include a broader cross-section of the population if the United States is to maintain and grow its competitive economic advantage. In that regard, he pointed out that too many young people in the country are not getting the education they need to succeed in a knowledge-based economy and that, in order to ensure students' success, it is widely accepted that they must be equipped with the skills, knowledge, abilities and habits of mind that include multicultural competence and the ability to work with people who represent diverse cultures and perspectives.

It also is recognized, he added, that an inclusive and supportive learning and working environment, including issues of race and ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, socioeconomic background, veteran status and more, is important to the recruitment and retention of talented faculty, staff and students.

Stating that the study must be done now, President Reilly indicated that the issues identified by the survey must be addressed expeditiously because they impact the educational environment and quality of learning. These efforts, he said, are an extension of the services and support already provided to enable student success.

President Reilly then called on Interim Assistant Vice President Vicki Washington and Lisa Beckstrand, Director of the Inclusivity Initiative, to present more information on the climate study.

Ms. Washington began by thanking the campuses that participated in the pilot study, noting that it took courage to face sometimes painful results. Noting that a welcoming climate benefits all students, she listed the following reasons for conducting a climate assessment:

- To foster a caring university community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse multicultural world;
- To open the doors wider for underrepresented groups;
- To improve the environment for working and learning on campus.

The objective of the project is to provide the UW System with institutional information, analysis, and recommendations related to campus climate that will be used in conjunction with other data to provide an inclusive view of the respective campuses and a system-wide review. Projected outcomes are to:

- Learn constituent groups' perceptions about campus climate;
- Understand their perceptions about campus responses to climate issues, such as pedagogy, curricular issues, professional development, inter/intra-group relations, and respect issues;
- Use results to inform ongoing work regarding diversity.

Ms. Beckstrand explained that the process includes review of research already conducted, work by campus committees and governance groups, followed by distribution of the survey, examination of the results and development of action plans based on that information.

Referring to research on climate in higher education, Ms. Beckstrand quoted from literature, noting the significant impacts of campus climate on creating knowledge and stating that “preserving climate that offers equal learning opportunities . . . is a primary responsibility of educational institutions.”

She pointed out that campus climate affects the following areas, which, in turn, affect the climate: Access/retention; research/scholarship; curriculum/pedagogy; inter-group/intra-group relations; university policies/service; and external relations. Actions that influence the campus climate can be categorized as: Symbolic actions; fiscal actions; administrative actions; and educational actions.

The process from August 2007 to date included the following steps: UW System became aware of bias incidents at several campuses; Rankin & Associates, a premier consultant who has done more than 70 studies in that area was hired; a Climate Study Working Group was formed; Fact-finding group meetings with stakeholders were convened; a protocol and survey instrument were developed; the survey was administered; data were analyzed; and survey results were presented on campus.

Ms Washington noted that the institutions participating in the pilot year of the study were: UW Colleges, UW-La Crosse, UW-Milwaukee; UW-Oshkosh, and UW-Stevens Point. Four of those institutions also were involved in the Equity Scorecard project.

The survey instrument consisted of 87 questions, with additional questions added by the institutions. It included space for respondents to provide commentary and was available in on-line or paper-and-pencil options. All members of each university community were invited to participate. Results included respondents’ personal experiences, perceptions of climate, perception of institutional actions, and input into recommendations for change.

Limitations included a self-selection bias; caution in generalizing results with a less than 30% response rate; and not reporting groups of fewer than ten persons in order to protect confidentiality.

As to response, Ms. Washington reported that 13,469 people participated in the survey. The response rate for faculty was 34%; for academic staff, 42%; for classified staff, 40%; and for students, 14%. Students of color responded at a higher rate than other students. Ms. Beckstrand and Ms. Washington also outlined response rates by gender, racial identity, disability status, and sexual orientation.

Among the successes found in the survey were:

- 72% to 87% of respondents indicated they were comfortable with the climate.
- The majority of students indicated they were satisfied with their educations.
- The majority of employees were satisfied with their jobs.

Challenges included the following:

- Widespread institutional classicism between and among peer groups (faculty, academic staff, classified staff);
- High incidence of sexual assault occurring on or off campus;
- Numerous incidents of racial profiling on most campuses;
- Retention of students of difference, especially students of color and sexual minorities.

Turning to individual institutional results, Ms. Washington indicated that concerns at the UW Colleges included the following.

- Staff members were more likely than faculty and student respondents to experience harassment.
- Staff members reported that they had less status and, consequently, less privilege within the institution than other employees.
- A higher percentage of sexual minority respondents believed they had experienced harassment.

Concerns at UW-La Crosse included the following:

- 14% of responding students and 30% of responding employees had personally experienced “exclusionary, intimidating, offensive and/or hostile conduct.”
- A significant percentage of employees who experienced such conduct felt it was due to “Institutional status,” i.e. academic and classified staff versus faculty.
- 96 students and employees (4% of respondents) believed they had been victims of sexual assault; 86 of the 96 were students; 57% occurred off campus.

Concerns at UW-Milwaukee included the following:

- One-third of all respondents (31% of white respondents and 38% of respondents of color) indicated they were aware of harassment on campus within the past two years.
- Most of the observed harassment was based on race (36%), ethnicity (36%), gender (33%), sexual orientation (28%).
- 61% of respondents with learning disabilities (and 51% with physical disabilities) believed they had experienced offensive, hostile or intimidating behavior based on their disability.

Ms. Beckstrand reported that concerns at UW-Oshkosh included the following:

- Overall, classified staff members and students of color are less satisfied and comfortable on campus than others.
- One quarter of all respondents indicated that they were aware of or had observed harassment on campus within the last two years.

- Most of the observed harassment was based on sexual orientation (49%), gender (30%), ethnicity (29%), race (28%), gender identity (24%), gender expression (24%).
- The culture of drinking plays a significant role in sexual assaults. Assault victims' comments indicated they had been drinking and, when they knew the assailant, that person also had been drinking.

Concerns at UW-Stevens Point included:

- 51 respondents (3%) believed they were victims of sexual assault and the majority of those did nothing to report the assault or seek help.
- 17% of respondents believed they had experienced some form of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive or hostile conduct; and the majority did not report it.
- The greatest source of perceived harassment was generally within the status (e.g. student against student, faculty against faculty).
- 50% of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual respondents believed they had experienced harassment in the form of derogatory remarks.

Concluding the presentation, Ms. Washington indicated that chancellors and provosts at the five institutions were working with their diversity leadership committees and other stakeholders to develop action plans and that participants in the second round of the Climate Study (December 2008-09) would be UW-Eau Claire, UW-Parkside, UW-River Falls, and UW-Whitewater.

A presentation then was made on the UW-La Crosse Climate Survey by Barbara Steward, Director of Multicultural Student Services, and Carmen Wilson, Special Assistant and Advisor to the Chancellor. Ms. Steward began by pointing to survey results showing that most students and employees were comfortable or very comfortable with the campus climate.

Fourteen percent of students and 30% of employees had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive and/or hostile behavior.

Dr. Wilson explained that, of the women students who had experienced such behavior, 47% said it was because of gender, while a much smaller percentage of men had the same perception. A similar pattern was evident among women and men employees.

Of those who experienced offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct, few faculty and students felt it was due to institutional status, while the percentage was much higher among academic and classified staff – figures which reflect the issue of classism, which is similar across campuses.

Among students and employees of color, most thought that offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct they experienced was due to race, while very few white students and

employees felt that race was a factor in the negative conduct they experienced. Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students were much more likely than heterosexual students to attribute offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct to their sexual orientation; and students and employees with disabilities were likely to attribute offensive conduct they experienced to their disabilities.

Ms. Stewart related that five forms of offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct were reported: Deliberately ignored or excluded; felt intimidated or bullied; stares; derogatory remarks; and isolated or left out when working in groups.

Ninety-six respondents (four percent) reported being victims of sexual assault while at UW-La Crosse. Of these, 86 were students. Most assaults occurred off-campus and most were done by other students. More than 90% did not report the assault, other than to a friend, or seek help from campus or community resources.

Respondents offered a number of reasons for not reporting alleged sexual assaults. Some felt they would not be believed or feared reporting the incident. Some commented that they were too embarrassed or did not want others to know the assault occurred. Others said that they just wanted to forget it happened, or that it became more real for them when they stated it out loud. Several did not report the incidents because the perpetrators were their friends and they didn't want to get them in trouble. Others seemed to blame themselves for the assaults because they were drinking, or felt that others would say it was their fault because of how they were dressed.

In conclusion, the presenters indicated that as a next step, the campus was gathering an implementation team to develop action steps and a site was set up for web-based feedback on the report.

Regent Crain expressed strong concern about the 287 reported sexual assaults – calling it an alarming and very disturbing number. She strongly urged that this problem be a major area of focus.

Indicating that the problem is not unique to Wisconsin, Dr. Rankin said that there is a rape culture on campus, often fueled by alcohol.

Referring to statistics from UW-La Crosse, Regent Crain noted that 23 reported being assaulted by strangers. While that was true, Dr. Rankin explained, many of those respondents stated they were too drunk to know who assaulted them.

Indicating that student affairs officers are working on the problem, Senior Vice President Rebecca Martin noted that the report shines a light on this disturbing issue and gives it a sense of urgency.

Dr. Wilson added that a violence prevention specialist had been on the UW-La Crosse campus, which led to a higher number of students reporting assaults.

Ms. Washington said that the same is true on other campuses. While there is increased reporting, the number of such assaults remains under-reported.

In response to a question by Regent Smith as to how the UW System compares with other institutions, Dr. Rankin said that the full report would indicate similarities to other states, as well as areas that are unique to the UW System.

With regard to the methodology of the survey, Regent Bartell inquired about staring as a form of offensive or hostile conduct and asked why employees experience more offensive conduct than students. He also asked whether it is reasonable to expect both positive and negative responses.

Dr. Rankin replied that stares, exclusion and other behaviors contribute to a hostile climate in which a student might feel singled out and left out because of his/her skin color or other difference. As to employees, she indicated that part of the problem is that there is a lack of communication among classes of employees and that classified staff, across the country, feel the most disenfranchised and devalued. With regard to both positive and negative responses, she explained that some respondents are personally comfortable in the campus climate, but at the same time see problems for others.

Regent Loftus asked how the survey was conducted and whether it included a representative sample of possible respondents.

Dr. Rankin replied that the survey was created with input from representatives of each of the participating campuses. Questions were based on previous research and customized for the UW System. The survey was e-mailed to the entire campus community, and campus committees were asked to encourage participation. Responses, which were sent to Dr. Rankin, were anonymous.

In response to a further question by Regent Loftus, Dr. Rankin indicated that each campus would receive its own report.

Regent Falbo asked about the ability to identify broader issues from the survey, to which Ms. Washington replied that the January report from Dr. Rankin would help to identify such issues. Dr. Rankin added that best practices would be identified as well.

Chancellor Wells pointed out that, in order to improve, it is necessary for a campus to keep focused on the issues identified in the survey. At UW-Oshkosh, the intention was to make it part of the Inclusive Excellence Plan.

Regent Loftus requested a copy of the survey.

Regent Davis commended the pilot campuses for having the courage to take on uncomfortable issues and thanked the next four campuses for stepping up. She asked what the Board could do to help.

President Reilly replied that this discussion contributed to a feeling of transparency around tough issues and provided fodder for the second round of surveys. The Campus Climate Study, he said, helps to make the UW a national leader in this area.

Dr. Rankin said she was impressed by the UW's willingness to engage in these difficult issues and noted in that regard the Board's role in external relations. She also remarked that, by its interest, the Board made a positive contribution to campus climate.

Regent Spector commented that, while reporting problems is important, there is also a need to educate students about appropriate behavior.

Dr. Rankin agreed, noting that many problems occur in students' first year on campus. There is a need for education, through curriculum and other means, about being responsible members of the campus community.

Regent Thomas remarked that the survey results reflected what she and other students have experienced and commented that different approaches are needed for students and employees. While a behavior like staring clearly is a less onerous problem than assault, she observed that dealing with smaller problems first could help to change the larger picture and make worse problems less difficult to address.

THE STORY BEHIND THE NUMBERS: UW-LA CROSSE PRESENTATION

Introducing the presentation, Chancellor Joe Gow remarked that, while numbers are used to quantify success, they may tell only part of the story – a part without reference to emotion, passion or inspiration.

The presentation would include several video stories behind the numbers – including stories of an international student, of parents and students arriving on campus, of students who give back to the community, of students becoming involved in the political process, and of a student who overcame great obstacles to become an inspiring success.

Noting the rapid growth in UW-La Crosse's study-abroad program, Chancellor Gow indicated that there also has been encouragement of international students and scholars to come to UW-La Crosse.

He then introduced Jay Lokken, Director of the Office of International Education, who indicated first that the university's success in becoming a leader in international education in the UW System and nationwide stemmed from a shared vision that Wisconsin students must have global competencies to be successful in the 21st century and that, to successfully internationalize education, an integrated model would be needed, including recognition that all aspects of the university – the curriculum, faculty, students, administration and student life – are all part of the global village. It also meant

reaching out to sister cities, international organizations, elected officials and international businesses.

Funds were set aside to create the International Development Fund for faculty and staff, allowing hundreds to present at international conferences, engage in faculty exchanges, develop new curricula and establish new international programs for students.

The UW-La Crosse student government confirmed its commitment to international education by making it a recipient of special tuition funding. In that regard it was noted that UW-La Crosse is one of the few universities in the country at which differential tuition is earmarked for student scholarships and international undergraduate research.

In 2004, UW-La Crosse was chosen by the American Council on Education to present in Washington D.C. as a leading institution for internationalization in higher education.

UW-La Crosse also collaborates with the La Crosse Public Schools on internationalization models; and the School of Education is developing a global focus curriculum to ensure that teacher education graduates have global competencies. A special point of pride is the La Crosse Northwood International Charter School, an excellent resource for students and the entire community.

Participation in the university's study abroad program increased from 100 to 500 in less than 10 years; and students now come to campus with the expectation that they will study abroad no matter what their major. Nearly one-fourth of UW- La Crosse seniors have studied abroad – more than twice the rate of peer institutions. UW-La Crosse students have the opportunity to study at top partner universities worldwide; and short-term programs allow them options to study abroad without delaying time to degree.

There also are international events on campus, such as the international student banquet that allows students, staff, and the community to sample the foods and customs of the campus' 350 international students. Last year, these students had an economic impact of \$6.1 million on the community.

In summary, Mr. Lokken emphasized that students need cross-cultural skills, world languages, critical thinking skills and international experiences to be successful and that investment in international education today can yield impressive dividends tomorrow

A video then was shown about the story of Volodymyr Volkov, a student from the Ukraine who came to study at UW-La Crosse. He was especially impressed by the welcoming people and the strong Political Science Department on campus, which helped him to get an internship in Washington D.C.

Introducing the next video presentation, Carmen Wilson, Assistant and Advisor to the Chancellor, noted that the popularity of UW-La Crosse results in four to five applications for every first-year opening and a retention rate of nearly 90% to the sophomore year. The video showed Chancellor Gow helping new students move into the residence halls and serenading them by playing the guitar and singing.

Noting that nearly 80% of seniors and almost half of incoming freshmen have engaged in community service or volunteer work, Chancellor Gow introduced Garth Tymeson, a faculty member in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, and Shelley Wetzel, project director of the YMCA, to describe a special mentoring program.

Professor Tymeson pointed out that people with disabilities are more vulnerable to physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles than the general public for a number of reasons, including lack of programs, untrained staff, inaccessible facilities and cost of special equipment. Solutions require innovative, multidisciplinary approaches, including collaborations with community agencies and families. Such a solution is UW-La Crosse's physical activity mentoring program for children with disabilities that is part of the adapted physical education teacher preparation program. This grant-funded program, he remarked, has a significant impact on UW-La Crosse students and many persons in the community as well.

Ms. Wetzel added that the program gives college students opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations that meet significant community health needs. Not only is the program a great fit for service learning, she observed, it also guides parents on how to teach their children and encourages families to increase physical activity levels.

A video then was shown of UW-La Crosse students working with children with disabilities and their families, which described the benefits and rewards that accrued to all from these activities.

Turning to student involvement in the political process, Chancellor Gow introduced Professor of Political Science Joe Heim who described the extent of student participation in recent elections. Four years ago, he reported, more than 98% of eligible students voted on campus. In the 2008 election 2,376 students residing on campuses cast votes – the highest single ward total among the city's 17 wards; and the total for the largely student neighborhood surrounding campus also was impressive, with an 80-90% turnout in campus wards. He congratulated the students for demonstrating convincingly the power of their vote.

He noted a long tradition of regional and national politicians visiting the university and community of La Crosse, including John McCain, Chelsea Clinton, Michelle Obama, President Clinton, and President-Elect Obama. According to a recent survey, two-thirds of UW-La Crosse students reported that the university contributed

quite a bit or very much to their personal development and knowledge about voting in local, state, and national elections with activities including voter registration drives, campus debates, and other events. Professor Heim felt that the key to the university's success in student engagement in the political process has been the collective efforts of many on campus, including the student association, the university's Joint Legislative Relations Committee, composed of students, faculty and academic staff, and a supportive administration.

Introducing the final segment of the presentation, Chancellor Gow noted that nearly 80% of UW-La Crosse students have reported that the university helped them cope with their non-academic responsibilities, including work and family; and he introduced Amy Sullivan, Director of the Self-Sufficiency Program, to tell an inspirational story of student success.

In opening remarks, Ms. Sullivan explained that the Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP) is a college preparatory program unlike any other in the nation. Her job is to recruit, inspire, and then prepare low-income parents, mostly single mothers, for a college education. To do so, she works with social service agencies, schools, the media, and other organizations to offer a bridge to college for non-traditional students who mostly are among the working poor.

The SSP was founded in 1988 as an outreach program of the Women's Studies Department, with a mission to address barriers that exist for poor women to access and succeed at higher education. Classes, which are free of cost, are held early in the evening, with free child care provided. While most participants are single mothers, the program is open to men and women of all ages, the only criteria being that they have a high school diploma and a strong interest in exploring a college education.

The three main objectives of the program are to:

- Familiarize students with college programs, admissions, and financial aid;
- Work with them on critical thinking, writing, and math skills; and
- Customize a personal education plan that sets each student up for success.

However, it is the informal objectives, Ms. Sullivan remarked, that form the heart and soul of the SSP experience. In the program, students find a welcoming environment where they can air their fears and anxieties about returning to school, where they can find like-minded classmates to dream and struggle alongside them, and where they learn that their life experience as multi-tasking parents is a valid asset when considering college. Among their activities, participants read and analyze poetry, prose, history and the media; they learn about and tour UW-La Crosse and Viterbo University; they learn about college admission procedures, financial aid, and stress/time management skills; and they meet successful SSP graduates.

Five years ago, the SSP Advisory Board started a scholarship for non-traditional adult students, called the Locally Grown Scholarship, which has raised \$50,000 to date

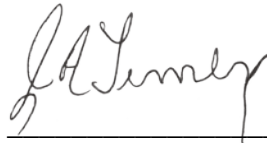
from locally raised donations. This scholarship not only helps students with school expenses, but also connects them to the broader community who support and cheer their successes.

With more than 350 graduates, Ms. Sullivan continued, the SSP has many success stories, including UW-La Crosse graduate Libia Aguilar who won a Gates Millennium Scholarship in 2000 and now is an attorney in La Crosse, and Alisha Amann, currently in her last year of medical school in Missouri. Many graduates continue to live and work in the La Crosse area as educators, nurses, social workers and – soon – a veterinarian.

A video then was shown about the trials and triumphs of one SSP student, Audreyona Chavez, a single mother who persevered to achieve her vision of becoming a veterinarian and a proud role model for her young son.

Upon conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Submitted by:



Judith A. Temby, Secretary