

MINUTES  
JOINT MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND  
BUSINESS, FINANCE, AND AUDIT COMMITTEES  
BOARD OF REGENTS  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Madison, Wisconsin  
July 14, 2011

Report from the Office of Operations Review and Audit: Service Learning in the UW System

Regent Crain convened the joint meeting of the Education Committee and Business, Finance, and Audit Committee at 12:25 p.m. Regents Crain, Falbo, Bradley, D. Davis, Evers, Pruitt, Smith, Spector, and Womack were present. Regent Walsh joined the meeting in progress.

Regent Crain reminded her colleagues that the primary responsibility of the Office of Operations Review and Audit was to ensure that University of Wisconsin programs, policies, and practices were conducted in accordance with state law and Regent policy. There was no action required in reviewing the report.

Regent Falbo introduced Elizabeth Dionne as the new Director for the Office of Operations Review and Audit, noting that he had served on the search committee for Ms. Dionne and that she had been the committee's unanimous choice. Ms. Dionne had been in her position for only four weeks, having moved to Madison from Missouri and bringing with her deep experience.

Ms. Dionne provided an overview of the Report on "Service Learning in the UW System." She summarized the review's objectives, which focused on the roles played by UW institutions in support of service learning programs, and an assessment of the safety and risk management measures taken by the UW System and the institutions to ensure the safety of student participants. Service learning, she informed the Regents, was a credit-bearing form of experiential learning that integrated community service with academic study. UW-Eau Claire was the only UW institution that required service learning for the baccalaureate degree. Forty-eight percent of seniors at UW System institutions, versus 46% nationally, were involved in a service learning or community-based course project.

UW institutions offered differing levels of support to the students engaged in service learning, and Ms. Dionne identified the various roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved, including those at the institutional level, like the faculty who were at the front line of organizing service learning opportunities for their students, as well as their students; and the external parties, like the off-site community agencies where students participated in the service learning activities. She also reviewed the risk and liability considerations involved in these programs (including location of service learning sites, transportation issues for students, safety and risks involved with sites, confidentiality of participants and clients, insurance coverage), as well as the safety and risk management measures taken to address these considerations (risk and liability assessment, site visits, communication and documentation of expectations and outcomes for participating students and agencies).

The report concluded that, overall, UW institutions offering service learning were doing a good job attending to risk and liability considerations by, for example, conducting site visits of community partners; addressing the transportation issues encountered by their students; and communicating and setting expectations with students regarding these experiences. The report included one recommendation that all those involved with service learning at the institutional level work with their own risk management staff and the UW System Office of Safety and Loss Prevention to determine the appropriate circumstances in which students were covered under statutory liability protections as agents of the State of Wisconsin.

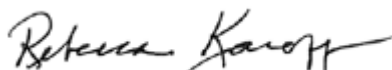
The recommendation generated discussion, which focused on the state coverage of liability, the need for UW institutions to ensure that the standard agreements set out in the statutory liability protections were being followed, and that students acted in their stated roles as defined and agreed upon in the service learning programs.

Senior Vice President Martin commented that service learning was one of the high-impact practices the Education Committee had heard about at a presentation earlier in the year. She asked the Provosts present whether these practices were vulnerable given the budget situation; the Provosts were unanimous in saying that high-impact practices remained priorities. UW-Eau Claire Provost Patricia Kleine added that her institution's required service learning programs were faculty-led, would continue, and carefully complied with the standard liability agreements as recommended in the report.

In response to a question from Regent Womack, Ms. Dionne replied that her office's review had not found any reports of accidents or problems with service learning programs. In response to a question from Regent Crain, Senior Vice President Martin said that no action was required on the report recommendation but that campuses might choose to adhere more closely to it. Ms. Dionne added that many institutions had informed her that they planned to follow the recommendation.

Members of both committees thanked Ms. Dionne for the report. The joint meeting of the Education Committee and Business, Finance, and Audit Committee adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Rebecca Karoff  
Secretary, Education Committee