

Report on IBHE Faculty Advisory Council Meeting March 18-19, 2010

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The Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) met at the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois on Thursday and Friday March 18 and 19, 2010. The main goal of this meeting was to learn as much as possible about the state of higher education in Illinois and brainstorm ways to safeguard the future of higher education in the State.

The speaker for Thursday's dinner meeting was Charles Evans, University of Illinois Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. Mr. Evans who has many years of experience with IBHE as well as the University of Illinois administration offered insights on how FAC can be a more effective advocate for faculty and higher education in Illinois. Urbana Senate Executive Committee Chair Joyce Tolliver was also present at the dinner meeting.

Friday's FAC meeting was called to order by Chair John Bennett at 8:30 AM with representatives from 28 member institutions present. Special guests included University of Illinois Vice President for Technology and Economic Development Avijit Ghosh, Executive Director of Governmental Relations Mike Bass and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs University Charles Evans. Special guests from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign included Chancellor/Provost Robert Easter, Associate Provost for Budgets & Resource Planning Mike Andrechak, Institute of Government & Public Affairs Director Robert Rich and Senate Executive Committee Chair Joyce Tolliver. Other special guests included IBHE Deputy Director of External Relations Don Sevenser, IBHE Associate Director for Academic Affairs Ocheng Jany and University of Illinois Alumni Association's *Illinois Connection* Director Amy Eichhorst. Three invited students from the Urbana campus were also present as follows: Jonathan Wilson, ISAC student commissioner as well as undergraduates Farid Zaghoul and Brian Arvid Schmidt.

Chancellor/Provost Easter welcomed the group to Urbana and noted that in light of the challenges faced by higher education in Illinois difficult decisions need to be made with consensus. He mentioned that the Beckman Institute (site of the FAC meeting) pioneered transforming research silos into multidisciplinary activities. Chancellor Easter mentioned that his campus had received about 27,000 applications for admission for the Fall 2010 semester for about 7,000 available slots. He added that the Urbana campus received about \$360 million in research funds last year, mostly through competitive grants. An additional \$75 million in new grants came through the federal stimulus funding. He described the Research Park and noted that about 70 companies are active in the park making the best of the industry as well as the faculty and students of *Illinois*.

Chancellor Easter expressed concern about the potential loss of outstanding faculty in the future due to the State's financial crisis and added that there are challenges ahead for remaining competitive. He stressed the need for a collaborative effort to accomplish our goals, given the budget realities. For example, he shared concern over the increasingly high college tuition and how that might make it difficult, if not impossible, for some to obtain a quality higher education. However, he expressed confidence in a bright future for higher education.

Associate Provost Budgets and Resource Planning Mike Andrechak gave a presentation and reviewed the State's financial picture including a General Revenue Fund (GRF) shortfall at the beginning of FY10 of \$2.8 billion and a possible FY11 budget deficit of \$9 to \$13 billion. He expressed concern over the State's disturbing trend of continuing to fall behind, employment growth, slow recovery from recessions, continuing decline in the State's competitive position due to more job losses, and a potential big drop per capita income. Andrechak pointed out a number of factors as potentially posing considerable risk to higher education in the State such as uncertainty about the form and extend of tax increase, loss of stimulus funds, an underfunded pension system, and structural changes in the economy. He mentioned that the State's economy is modeled for a manufacturing state which is not most appropriate for our current economy. Andrechak shared with FAC ways in which the Urbana campus is addressing the implications of the State's cash crisis. He referred to Stewarding Excellence @ Illinois and how faculty are involved in the planning and decision making process.

Amy Eichhorst, Director of Illinois Connection discussed how her organization can have an impact on higher education funding through grass roots advocacy. She referred to the Illinois Connection's base of 700,000 alumni as a helpful means to engage and inform the legislature and the public by taking a message directly to them. Eichhorst pointed out that Illinois Connection has about 6,000 people involved from the three campuses of the University. She emphasized the

significance of the constituents' role in making a difference beyond what professional lobbyists can accomplish. She described her organization's web site and how it can help residents of the State identify and contact their federal and state legislators. Eichhorst identified the following as messages that Illinois Connection has been trying to send out: fix the State's financial crisis; investing in higher education and University of Illinois is an investment in the future of the State; university is an economic driver; the state must follow through on its financial commitments and fund higher education appropriately and with certainty. She particularly emphasized one-on-one contact with legislators as the best way to have a positive influence. It was pointed out that university employees must be careful in how and when they contact their legislators to avoid violation of lobbying regulations that apply to State employees.

A panel discussion including Avijit Ghosh, Robert Rich, Mike Bass and Charles Evans followed. Joyce Tolliver and Don Sevener also engaged in the discussion. It was pointed out that the next fiscal year will be particularly challenging for higher education in Illinois. The 1% tax increase proposed by the Governor and dedicated to education may pit our interest against other sectors. But the fact is that a comprehensive solution with certainty in the future of higher education is needed in order to ensure a competitive future for the State.

It was pointed out that the different sectors of education have not worked well together and that the state of higher education depends on K-12. We need to work together as P-20 - - higher education needs to reach out to K-12. We must show that we are accountable and not simply asking for funds. The general public does not necessarily have a comprehensive picture of the significant contributions of higher education and may relate more to the financial aspects of it. One of our biggest economic development contributions is graduating students who will have higher earnings and thus pay more taxes, enhance quality of life for all and the future of the State by providing goods and services, creating jobs, etc. Other contributions of higher education such as innovations in health, energy, technology and economic development were pointed out as well. We need to make the point that higher education is a considerable driver and an investment in the future of the State, not a drain of its resources. The State actually gains more dollars for every dollar it invests in higher education. In the meantime, one of our major goals should be to make the point that the State must meet its financial commitment to higher education and with a reasonable schedule.

The story of higher education is a complicated one. We need to work with industry leaders and others and help them tell our story to the public and the legislators. But first we need to help them develop a more comprehensive picture of higher education and its enormous contributions to the state, national and global communities. We should go beyond financial advantages offered by higher education. Our messages to different sectors of the public must be appropriate for the group. We need to think about what to say, who to say it and how to say it.

As we take a critical look at our programs these days, we need to think about what we want our institutions to look like in the future. What programs should we offer in the future? Should some programs be dropped or combined with others for more efficient use of our limited resources and to establish new and creative programs that utilize our existing resources to offer outstanding new programs? Should we invest in entirely new programs that will pay off in different ways in the future? We need long range planning.

A discussion was held with three invited students from the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois: Jonathan Wilson, Farid Zaghoul and Brian Schmidt. Students spoke about a number of issues including faculty and course evaluation, the need for more students to understand financial realities of higher education. It was pointed out that many students do not quite know accurately what a faculty member does beyond going to class a few hours a week. Some students feel that faculty are under-worked and overpaid which is quite contrary to the facts. We need to correct this gross misperception.

The meeting continued with a number of business items including what, if anything, we should do in support of our previous nominations to the Governor for faculty membership on the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM. The next FAC meeting will be a joint meeting with IBHE on Tuesday April 6th at the herald Washington College in Chicago.

Submitted respectfully,
Abbas Aminmansour