

IFC Report
October, 2008

The 2008 Intercampus Faculty Council Retreat was held on September 16-17. Eleven IFC representatives and four Vice Presidents attended. Staff from Academic and Student Affairs also attended. All three UMSL IFC Reps were there: Matthew Keefer, Carole Murphy, and Paul Speck. Paul Speck serves as Chair of IFC this year.

Vice President of Information Technology Gary Allen brought three issues before IFC: status of the Emergency Mass Notification System, the issues surrounding the Information Security Program, and need for a greater faculty involvement in the planning process for new networked research computing system.

Emergency Mass Notification System. UM has partnered with 3n (National Notification Network), the leading mass notification system provider. The 3n system notifies message recipients using a variety of modes of communication, including phone, e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, pager, fax and BlackBerry devices. With about 64,000 students plus thousands of faculty and staff spread statewide across four campuses, the University needed the capacity to issue event-based alerts tailored to specific, targeted audiences as well as the ability to communicate rapidly across a single campus or system-wide for large-scale emergencies. The problem now is getting students, faculty, and staff to sign up. Enrollment is ongoing.

Information Security Program. A major project this year was to get rid of all social security numbers in the system. VP Allen reported on progress with this. His comments to IFC focused on inadequate password security practices among faculty. Discussion indicated that a two-level system would address most concerns without imposing too much burden on faculty. Further discussion is required.

Research Computing and Networking. VP Allen announced that a new fiber optic system will be rolled out next spring. It will be able to move massive databases. VP Allen asked that faculty across the system get involved in the planning process.

Our IT Committee may want to follow up on these issues.

Interim VP of Academic and Student Affairs Steve Graham covered a number of topics: status of the Search for a new VP for Academic & Student Affairs, Curriculum Alignment Initiatives, the American Council on Education (ACE) Analysis of Higher Education Act Reauthorization, MDHE Coordinated Plan, Institutional Conflict of Interest Policy, Grievance Procedures, System Response to Consider Lowering the Drinking Age, and Cost Issues Related to Textbooks.

IFC asked its Chair (Speck) to request greater faculty representation on the Search Committee for VP of Academic and Student Affairs.

Senate Bill 389 mandates that public colleges and universities, in conjunction with the Missouri Department of Higher Education, develop entry and exit level competencies for

initial general education courses. The Curriculum Alignment Steering Committee includes representatives from the postsecondary and secondary sectors, as well as liaisons from discipline workgroups. Its report is at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/files/bb0608.caireport.pdf>. VP Graham wanted IFC to be aware of this work and to encourage interested faculty and faculty committees to participate in the process.

On July 31, Congress passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act. A summary of the Act provided by ACE can be found at <http://www.accnet.edu>. The Act includes some burdensome new reporting and disclosure requirements, as well as new rules regarding textbooks, the bundling of information for classes, and peer to peer file-sharing.

VP Graham updated IFC on progress by CBHE on a Coordinated Plan for Higher Education in Missouri. At this point, the plan fails to address many issues critical to the UM System. VP Graham brought the issue to IFC because he feels UM faculty must become more active on these statewide committees and he wants IFC members to take that message back to their campuses.

VP Graham reported that the System wants to develop policy on Institutional Conflict of Interest. Faculty need to comment on the draft document. VP Graham promised to send it to the four Senate Chairs, and they agreed to respond by the end of October.

A new Faculty Grievance Policy has been piloted by UM-Columbia for the past three years. A problem has developed with the new procedure. UMKC is eager to move away from the old process. IFC decided that UMC should continue development of the new process for one additional year and that UMKC should join the pilot process.

Nationally, some university presidents back an initiative to lower the drinking age. UM's officers considered the issue and decided against it.

Finally, VP Graham noted that various political bodies are paying great attention to the rising cost of textbooks and the practice of bundling. Bundling, in particular, raises conflict of interest issues. IFC may need to address this.

Our Academic Advisory Committee may want to consider the draft document on Institutional Conflict of Interest.

Vice President for Human Resources, Betsy Rodriguez

Dr. Betsy Rodriguez, the new VP for Human Resources, introduced herself to IFC. Faculty asked her about the Faculty Retirement System and its possible exposure to the crisis in credit and equity market. VP Rodriguez answered all faculty questions. In sum, the UM Retirement System is a Defined Benefits Program. It is fully funded, and if it ever falls short of its actuarial requirement of full funding, the State makes up the difference. There has never been a time when the state did not meet this obligation. In addition, the Investment Portfolio is highly diversified, and the System has created a stabilization fund to smooth out variation from the investment portfolio.

VP Krawitz, who had joined the conversation, reaffirmed that retirement money is held in a trust fund, that the system is fully funded, and that the University has always contributed any amount necessary to keep the fund solvent.

Chair Speck asked VP Rodriguez to clarify the role of Benefits Committee and the possibility of developing greater linkage between IFC, the Benefits Committee, and campus Faculty Senates. He also asked if there are still problems regarding Coventry?

VP Rodriguez said that greater linkage between these groups is desirable, that complaints about Coventry have died down, and that two other retirement issues need to be considered, the feasibility of instituting an “85 and out” policy or automatic cost of living for retirees.

VP for Finance and Administration, Nikki Krawitz

VP Krawitz provided IFC Members with an update on the Budget and an update on appropriation request. UMSL should note that the appropriation request includes a \$2.36 million net increase for UMSL (to close the equity gap). In response to a series of questions, she noted that some of the funds expected from MOHELA may not materialize. She suggested that all projects based on those funds get started as soon as possible.

VP Krawitz noted that costs are going up 7% and that we will have to make a strong business case for any additional increase. “The campuses must say, we need “x” amount for “x” project. It is imperative to justify needs. Decide where you want to excel, where you want to make your investment. We have a President who will support strategic investments. . . . Foresee is not afraid to ask for what he thinks we need, but he wants us to think creatively about resources. We need to ask for what we want, explain why we need it, and explain what it will do for our campus.”

The Appropriation Request includes funds for merit raises, competitive compensation, technology infrastructure, enrollment growth, and economic development. Chair Speck asked if the proposed budget fully addresses the deferred maintenance issue. VP Krawitz said, no. “We have \$3 to \$400 million dollars of repair (deferred maintenance) that we expect to do. \$6 to \$700 million is what needs to be done.”

The VP’s bottom line opinion is that the current fiscal year should be okay if revenues come in as expected. [*Chair’s note: subsequent turmoil in the economy will reduce state revenues.*]

Finally, VP Krawitz spoke about two recent audits by federal agencies. Research offices and some faculty failed to comply with federal rules regarding their research contracts. As a result, UM may have to return millions of dollars. Furthermore, until the UM is in compliance, numerous contracts and applications are on hold. IFC, she said, should urge noncompliant faculty to change their behaviors.

Submitted by Paul Speck, IFC Representative and Chair