

Faculty Senate Executive Board/Central Administration Annual Retreat 2010

The Faculty Senate Executive Board had an excellent opportunity to meet with President Geoffroy and Executive Vice President and Provost Hoffman on July 19, 2010. At this meeting, the President and Provost responded to questions posed by the Faculty Senate Executive Board. The discussion was candid and will help guide the Faculty Senate during the 2010-2011 session. Five questions were developed by the Faculty Senate Executive Board and one member of the Executive Board was designated as the discussion leader for each question. These questions included the topics of post tenure review, the condition of the ISU "Community", shared governance, the student body and student recruitment and faculty salaries. A brief description of the questions discussed at the retreat follows:

Question on Post-tenure Review

While a question about post-tenure review was also presented during the 2009 retreat, given the interest expressed by the Board of Regents in this topic, recent changes in the Faculty Handbook (Section 3.4) and concerns about tenured faculty positions due to budget problems, it was deemed appropriate to "re-issue" the question about the Post-tenure Review Policy at Iowa State University. The President and Provost presented their perspectives about this topic and provided important ideas that will guide the Faculty Senate discussion on the post tenure review policy.

Question on the condition of the ISU "Community"

The current state of public higher education poses significant threats and opportunities for the ISU community. One of the major threats lies in increasing competition for limited resources, within and outside the university. A major opportunity lies in our ability to form effective interdisciplinary teams to address major challenges within our society. The discussion about the ISU Community was important and it is clear that all members of the ISU Community need to work to make sure that ISU is fully functional and collegial.

Question on Shared Governance

There has been shared governance issues/questions discussed at these retreats for at least the last five years. The Faculty Senate Executive Board is confident that university central administration is committed to the principles of shared governance between the faculty and the administration. However, during this past year, we have heard from numerous faculty (even from the floor of the senate) that they do not feel that they have a voice and that true shared governance does not exist at ISU. We have also heard that the senate (particularly the senate leadership) simply goes along with what the administration wants and thus shared governance is also diminished between the general faculty and the senate itself. The senate leadership does not agree with this assertion, yet we acknowledge that the general faculty are not aware of the level of shared governance that is actually occurring because often the business of shared governance occurs in confidential settings where the faculty involved are not free to share the process with the general faculty. Faculty participate in many confidential meetings at the university and college levels (e.g., UBAC, RPA conversations with the Provost, and other budget advisory committees). How much latitude do we have in sharing process

discussions and decisions with the general faculty without changing the relationship that these committees have with the administration? From your perspectives, are budget decisions parts of the shared governance process, or are budget decisions solely an administrative process with faculty input? The discussion on this topic was excellent and it is clear from the candid remarks from the Faculty Senate Executive Board and the President and Provost that all endorse the concept of shared governance. Shared governance is a priority at Iowa State University and generally in a good state at our institution.

Question on Student Body/Student Recruitment

There have been many studies that have highlighted the changes in the study body in the last 20 years. One area of concern is in the academic preparedness of today's college freshman. An increasing number of students require remedial courses in Math and/or English. However, these same students report very high levels of self-confidence and consider themselves "above average" students. Also, students are reporting increasing levels of bad habits are developed in high school (such as tardiness and not completing homework) and this is happening while grade inflation in high school is increasing. ISU has a stated goal of attracting and retaining outstanding students. Yet, the changes stated above need to be addressed for ISU to be successful in reaching this goal. The discussion was wide ranging and useful. Many ancillary topics were addressed and concepts developed. Generally, the exchange about the student body and student recruitment was beneficial to both parties.

Question on University Budget—Faculty salaries

It has been a difficult year dealing with mid-year cuts in state funding and with the impact of reduced the FY 2011 budget. We commended Provost Hoffman for making the budget process transparent through sharing with the university community the memos that she sent to administrators outlining the procedures and policies to be used in developing the budget. There was concern among the faculties of the different colleges about how the unequal weightings were determined. The result was some apparent ranking of the importance of different colleges or programs, which had the effect of labeling the "haves" and "have-nots."

Two years ago at this retreat it was noted that ISU faculty salaries were next to the bottom in the Peer 11 and that the Board of Regents supported the salary goal for ISU to be in the top 1/3 of our peers. Faculty salaries were not raised for the 2009-2010 academic year and faculty actually ended up with a pay cut in the form of furloughs and a reduced TIAA-CREF contribution. The restoration of the TIAA-CREF contribution, along with no planned furloughs, effectively restores salaries to the 2008-2009 level. While some monies were available for salary increases based on promotion, equity, retention, or merit, no raises were given for satisfactory performance.

The discussion about faculty salaries was difficult but agreeable. It is clear from the discussion that faculty salaries are perhaps the most important priority for the President and Provost.