

university

SENATE

November 19, 2003

Present: A. Aina, A. Aslanian, W. Boelke, S. DeLoughy, N. Dworkin, G., D. Grasso, J. Gravius, C. Hawkes, R. Hirshfield, K. Ierace, K. Koza, T. Kuther, P. Lyons, L. Marcone, J. Munz, F. Muska, J. Pohl, C. Rocca, P. Ross, J. Schlicht, R. Whittemore, K. Wiss, E. Wong, M. Wright

Visitors: R. Khoo, J. Wilcox, E. Buccini, L. Vaden-Goad, R. Veneziano

President: V. Nair

Parliamentarian: TBA

The meeting convened at 3:35 p.m.

I. Announcements:

A. Sen. President Nair introduced Tina Maripu, the Senate's new Recording Secretary.

B. Sen. Pres. Nair asked if the Senate would entertain the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Maureen Gamache served as the Recording Secretary of the University Senate for many years, and

WHEREAS, keeping attendance records, operating the recording equipment, and transcribing the audiotapes of the Senate meetings require diligence and organization, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Gamache excelled in performing the above duties and provided the Senate with invaluable service with punctuality, accuracy, and professionalism, therefore be it now

RESOLVED that the University Senate expresses its appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Gamache for her service to the Senate and wishes her well in all her future endeavors.

(Ross/Aina) Passed unanimously.

II. Minutes of the October 15, 2003 meeting - not available

III. Old Business

The Strategic Plan

Sen. Pres. Nair observed that the Strategic Plan had not yet undergone further revision and asked senators if they wanted to discuss the Plan at the present meeting or to postpone the discussion

until the December meeting. He expressed a preference for the second option. Sen. Ross expressed a preference for beginning discussion of the Strategic Plan.

Sen. Schlicht directed senators' attention to page 4 and took exception to the statement that saw the facilities, including buildings, as strength. He pointed out that, in fact, some facilities were either non-existent or in need of improvement.

Sen. Munz called into question whether the University wants to change the first strength listed on page 4. He added that tables particularly seem to have been written in some impenetrable code: for example, on page 9, what is "disability sp and sloppy"? V-P Buccini replied that the "sp" was a typo and "sloppy" should not have been included.

Sen. Whittemore said that on page 4, "technology" is less a strength than the training on how to use it. Several members of his department had made this observation. He added that training specifically in running online courses was needed. He agreed with Sen. Munz that the language of the plan was not precise enough to direct attention to an area (such as technology) in a helpful way. Sen. Whittemore added that on the same page "bureaucracy" was listed as a weakness, but the document was unclear about why - is the bureaucracy too visible or too inefficient? The issue is unclear.

Sen. Whittemore said that members of his department felt that the lack of corporate presence was a strength, not a weakness: corporate endowments and chairs have "expectations" attached to them, expectations that may not be in the interest of the academy. Sen. Hirshfield liked the idea of corporations providing endowed chairs, strings or no strings attached. V-P Buccini gave some background: ten years ago there were a number of major corporations headquartered in the Danbury area that could be tapped to help with additional dollars for a speaker series, for example. Many corporations nowadays, however, have their headquarters elsewhere, and it is elsewhere that gets funded with those extra dollars. So the lack of corporate presence is a weakness from that perspective.

Sen. President Nair pointed out that Dr. Randall Khoo, chairman of the UPBC, was in attendance. The UPBC had forwarded the Strategic Plan to the Senate, with its approval.

Sen. Whittemore noted that "compromised political clout" could be taken in two ways: that faculty are not making their voices heard in the corridors of power; that the University has been insulated relative to other universities' access to the Governor and fiscal matters.

Sen. Wiss said that she had had all the same questions that Sen. Whittemore had raised. She added that she would appreciate an explanation of the University of Phoenix as a threat to WestConn. V-P Buccini said that the pattern for the U of P has been to enter an area and offer courses that required little or no equipment, thus, on the cheap, luring away evening students from the established institutions. He made it clear that the U of P, recently denied access by the State, has increased its lobbying efforts and can, therefore, be considered a real threat. Sen. Wiss asked the meaning of CTC. Sen. Ross answered, "Community Technical College."

Sen. Ross expressed her concern about the use of "distinction" and "excellence," words often used in conjunction in the Plan. She wanted to see "distinction" used for programs that are directed toward a particular population. On page 15, for example, the Gerontology Certificate makes us distinct, as do the Ed.D. and the MFA in Art and now Writing. She prefers to think of "excellence" in relationship to the overall undergraduate education, including the General Education Requirements. She hoped that the Taskforce on General Education Requirements will recommend that an additional writing course will be added, as suggested by CUCAS several years ago when the English Department revised its programs.

On the matter of certificate programs, V-P Buccini said that all those programs go through the internal governance structure and then are reviewed by CSU.

Sen. Ross observed that those programs, mostly on the graduate level, that make WestConn distinctive do not, necessarily, contribute to the institution's excellence, which should be focused on our undergraduates. Sen. Hawkes said that we should strive for excellence in all programs, graduate and undergraduate, and that some of these programs should be distinctive as well. Sen. Ross emphasized her contention that undergraduate programs should receive the primary emphasis. She went on to say that there is a division in the school between those whose emphasis is on the liberal arts and those whose emphasis is on career orientation. Sen. Hawkes pointed out that WestConn's Mission Statement includes excellence in both the liberal arts and the professions.

Sen. Wiss, agreeing with Sens. Ross and Whittemore, asked why the liberal arts did not have a more prominent place in the Strategic Plan.

In response to a question by Sen. Gravius, Sen. President Nair said that the present Strategic Plan had not been revised as a result of the accreditation visit by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Some discussion on this topic followed.

Sen. Schlicht introduced the next point. He was concerned that students do not attend many extracurricular activities - the kinds of events that make a university unique. He wished that we could find some way to encourage students to attend these events. He spoke with colleagues, some of whom thought that giving credit to students for attending extracurricular events was impractical and others of whom thought it a possibility - for example, giving extra credit to a student who attend a lecture or a concert. Sen. Gravius noted the unfairness of giving credit to those who attend an event (sit in the audience) but not to those who organized the event. He said that there should be some reward for both planning and for attending an event.

Sen Whittemore pointed out how difficult it is to publicize an event. For example, the shuttle bus drivers would not allow any signs to be put up in their busses. He also noted that both Helen Masterson and Terry Buzaid use the VAX to send out messages to the academic community. But students do not check their school account; rather they continue using their own personal account, so we should be collecting at registration the students' own accounts. V-P Buccini encouraged senators to follow the good example of Sen. Schlicht by raising matters that are not in the Plan, but should be.

Sen. Ross noted that student participation in community service is not an assessment issue, as is suggested on pages 15 and 16 #3. Sen. President Nair pointed out that the percentage of graduate students could not be expanded, since the participation was in the past. Sen. Ross voiced enthusiastic support for student participation in community service, but she insisted that such participation not be listed under assessment.

Sen. Munz said that the Plan's emphasis on graduate, not undergraduate, programs and its emphasis on distance learning should not be university goals.

Sen. Wiss wondered how WestConn's expansion into Waterbury fit into any of the goals in the Plan and why there was no mention of the library. V-P Buccini said that he was awaiting the library's report. Sen. Wiss asserted that no Strategic Plan would be complete without mention of the library.

Sen. Whittemore suggested that on page 15, # 5 a "D" be added that made a goal the increase in the support for students making (or trying to make) the transition to graduate school.

Sen. Ross raised the matter of students' writing skills, since those skills are crucial to success not only at the University but on the job. How should this matter be evident in the Plan?

Sen. Lyons said that the English Department is at present visiting other departments on two matters: 1) creating their own "writing intensive" courses and 2) gauging interest in increasing the general education requirement in written communication to include a junior- or senior-level writing course in the major. All this, without anything showing up in the Strategic Plan.

Sen. Ross wondered where such a specific suggestion about improving students' writing should go. Sen. Gravius said that oral communication was also important, and he complimented MIS for building oral presentations into so many of their courses. Sen. Ross noted that many students are not given an opportunity to write. She said that students whom she had in a writing-to-learn class two years ago have not really written since.

Sen. Whittemore pointed out that the subject of an interesting conversation would be how the Plan seems to suggest (on page 16) that its graduates will work well outside of the area immediately served by WestConn, yet the Mission Statement talks about serving Connecticut and western Connecticut particularly. He went on to ask if non-credit programs were under the same obligation to assess their effectiveness. Jerry Wilcox responded by saying not to his knowledge.

Sen Whittemore then drew attention to the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) section of the Plan, saying that CSU's return of funds to WestConn, which depends solely on full-time students, should be listed as a weakness, since the University does not seem to be getting its fair share of the moneys. Sen. Ross added that, in the light of the emphasis in the Plan on lifelong learning and part-time students, using a formula that only took into account full-time students is flawed. Sen. Whittemore went on to say that the lack of understanding among the public about the nature of higher education is also a weakness; in addition, he mentioned a heavy teaching load and an increasing demand for research, especially among accrediting bodies.

Lack of flexibility in our website is also a weakness, according to some in Dr. Whittemore's department.

Sen. Ross wanted to emphasize that the following ought to be listed as strengths: the new Student Center, the nature trail on the Westside, the connection to Jane Goodall, the Weather Center, and clear channels to use to enable working in the community.

Sen. President Nair brought up the issue of the Mission Statement and Values, saying that he found it strange that "integrity" be limited to teaching and learning and not all that we do. V-P Buccini said that in order to change the Mission Statement and its supporting principles, a separate resolution would be needed, which, according to V-P Buccini, would have to go to the CSU system office.

MOTION: The Mission Statement shall be amended as follows:

Values:

- * Quality and integrity in all that we do and a commitment to continuous improvement
- * ~~Integrity in the process of teaching and learning~~
- * Respect for the dignity and rights of each member of our University community

(Lyons/ Munz)

Sen. Hawkes said that the fourth principle needed a small editorial correction, which had been made.

Motion passed: none opposed, one abstention.

Sen. Ross said that the basement of White Hall should be listed as a weakness, because of the poor air quality. Other senators, in a rush of comments, wanted to add the basement of Old Main and Higgins, both of which are embarrassments. Sen. Schlicht pointed out that much work has already been done to improve the campus, including White Hall; he also noted that there is a limit, both temporal and financial, to renovating buildings on campus.

As the discussion seemed to be drawing to a close, V-P Buuccini suggested that the comments about pages 1-13 of the Plan be forwarded to the UPBC for consideration and revision. Sen. President Nair pointed out that if the Plan goes back to the UPBC, the Senate could not act on it, though that will not prevent senators from discussing the Plan at the December meeting.

IV. New Business

What do we want in our new University President?

Sen. President Nair reported on the meeting with Chancellor Cibes about the search for WestConn's new president. The attendance was quite good; the meeting lasted forty minutes. Sen. President Nair had then said that if any further discussion was needed, the matter could be brought up at the Senate. Chancellor Cibes asked the following questions: (1) What qualities should the new president have? (2) What standards should the new president meet? (3) What goals should the new president seek?

Sen. Schlicht said that the previous discussion showed that there is a difference of opinion among faculty about the nature of the this institution and that until we can settle on the direction we want to go we cannot have a very helpful discussion about the search for a new president. Sen. President Nair said that several weeks ago someone had said that the job of a leader was to tell us what direction we should be moving in.

Sen. Whittemore noted that his department had cut short its meeting to join the meeting with Chancellor Cibes, but when members arrived (at about 4:45) the meeting with the Chancellor had adjourned. (The meeting had been scheduled for 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.) There followed explanations on both sides, Sen. President Nair assuring Sen. Whittemore that any comments by members of his department would be forwarded to Chancellor Cibes.

Sen. Schlicht elaborated on his earlier statement: that there is some confusion about WestConn's being a teaching institution or a research institution. More and more, publication seems to be what is rewarded. Sen. Dworkin suggested that raising that matter with the candidates would address that issue. Sen. Whittemore suggested that a new president might welcome both researchers and teachers. Sen. President Nair said that those responsible for writing the job description wanted to have comments from faculty so that these comments could be taken into consideration as they construct the job description. He added that it is true that we do not have agreement on what direction we want the University to take. There was further discussion about these matters, though nothing substantive was added.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Lyons, Secretary of the Senate
Tina Maripuu, Recording Secretary

WCSU Senate resolutions
November 19, 2003

WHEREAS, Maureen Gamache served as the Recording Secretary of the University Senate for many years, and

WHEREAS, keeping attendance records, operating the recording equipment, and transcribing the audiotapes of the Senate meetings require diligence and organization, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Gamache excelled in performing the above duties and provided the Senate with invaluable service with punctuality, accuracy, and professionalism, therefore be it now

RESOLVED that the University Senate expresses its appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Gamache for her service to the Senate and wishes her well in all her future endeavors.

(Ross/Aina) Passed unanimously. R-03-11-01

The Mission Statement shall be amended as follows:

Values:

- * Quality and integrity in all that we do and a commitment to continuous improvement
- * ~~Integrity in the process of teaching and learning~~
- * Respect for the dignity and rights of each member of our University community

(Lyons/ Munz) Passed; none opposed, one abstention. R-03-11-02