

Faculty Senate Report-Feb. 08
IBHE FAC

We met at Harold Washington College in Chicago in January and Western Illinois last Friday. In Chicago we talked with 33rd District Senator Dan Kotowski. The Senator is backing Harper College's latest initiative to offer two baccalaureate programs, leading to degrees in Public Safety Administration/Homeland Security and in Technology Management. His rationale is (1) that no four year institution is willing to do it; (2) that it is only a pilot program; and (3) that it is being privately funded. The FAC has already publicly opposed the expansion of Community College's mission to include 4-year degrees. We feel it may lead to a poor people's bachelor's degree and bachelor's degree for others who can afford to attend a four year school. The state is always worried about place bound students but offers no funds for the public four year schools to make offerings available at places like Lake County and other population centers that are not served by four year schools.

We met the day after the transportation bailout bill passed the legislature. As you may well remember, downstaters had hoped the capitol bill would be tied with the transportation bailout. Of course the Senator was happy the bailout bill had passed. Downstate Democratic Senators ended up voting with the senate president to get the transportation bailout bill passed without the capitol bill being considered.

The BHE passed last Tuesday a budget request for FY 09 that differs in form from what they have been doing. Since the current governor took office, the BHE request has tied to what the governor's budget people specified. The FAC has been asking the board to ask for what we need, not what the governor office has told us we needed. This year, under new Board Chair Carrie Hightman, the budget request is in a five step range-from no increase in general funds to what would really help us in meeting our needs-In our case 6.9%. In other words if higher education does not get what we need it is on the governor and the legislature. This is really important perception wise. Many legislators we have talked to over the years have wondered why we so upset with them since the legislature approved all or most of what the board asked for.

The importance of enrollment and tuition is really evident in the budget request. Estimated income funds for SIUC is up 3.3%, resulting in an overall increase of 2.6% if we get a 1% increase. Some comparables assuming a 1% GF increase. Note there are other local funds involved-like grants and contracts.

	Income Fund	Overall
Northern	16.3%	6.3%
Northeastern	24.3%	7.8%
Illinois State	10.3%	6.7%
SIUE	.5%	1.8%
Chicago State	14.2%	4.1%

A dose of reality-Last week it was reported that this year's revenues are running \$600,000,000 below the revenue estimates and the treasurer expects investment income to be about \$180,000,000 lower next year. The likelihood of getting even a one percent increase next year is low. I would not be surprised to see cuts. And this year is not safe-we could see a rescission if those revenue shortfalls continue. Unless something really dramatic happens-Like the governor and the legislative leaders coming together to solve our structural deficit, things will get worse before they will get better.

In Macomb we talked with Senator John M. Sullivan, the majority whip in the Senate and Vice Chairperson of the Senate's Higher Education committee. He shared his concern about the reports of dwindling revenues and stated his support for a constitutional convention to allow for a graduated income tax. A constitutional convention can be viewed a couple of ways-It could be good-Change in power of leadership, recall provisions and authorization of graduated income tax, but it could also be bad-the constitution protects pension benefits. And that is one of the huge costs that seem to be strangling the state. What we have to remember is that once a con con gets started everything is on the table.

Once again, Sullivan says let your local senators and representatives know we expect them to support higher education, and we expect them to make it a high priority with the leadership. I propose we invite our local representatives from a wide area-not just Bost and Luechtefeld but Bradley and Forby and others with SIU employees and students in the district for a discussion about state support. Not a complaining session, but just one that lets them know how important their support for higher ed is to us-Important enough for us to base our vote on.

April 9 is higher ed day in Springfield-I am not aware of what the university is planning-but having a group of faculty and students show up is important. Again we need to show it is very important to us.