

December 10, 2007

Dear Senators:

Effective immediately, I regret that I must resign from the Faculty Senate. I feel that this is necessary due to a conflict of interest. I recently accepted my Sociology colleagues' election and College of Liberal Arts Dean Alan Vaux's subsequent offer to serve as department chair effective August 16, 2008.

I feel that a commitment to serve in such an administrative role, let alone current service in such roles, constitutes a conflict of interest with Faculty Senate service. I first became aware of such conflicts of interest soon after my initial election to the Senate in 2002. During that initial year I was serving my final year as department chair. On numerous occasions, I found it necessary to avoid freely and fully representing the interests of my Liberal Arts' colleagues who elected me. I was concerned that my department might be penalized if I were to voice a position out of line with the central administration's position. It was not until after I had completed my term as department chair that I was able to serve as a full-fledged faculty advocate. While I would agree that with regard to most matters that come before the Senate, faculty and administrative interests are isomorphic. However, on some matters such as Saluki Way, same sex partner benefits, the JRB, program consolidation and eliminations, and new tuition dollar allocations, to name a few recent examples, faculty and administrative values and interests have clashed. Senators who also serve as chairs, directors, deans, and associate deans are often expected by central and system administrators to be "team players." In short, administrators/senators must serve two masters, which, by definition, constitutes a conflict of interests.

Even in the absence of contentious issues, conflicts of interest can arise in the course of administrators/senators performing their day-to-day duties. Take, for example, the case of a department seeking to add a new program. Such curricular changes would be reviewed by the UEPC, which in turn would forward recommendations to the Senate. Of course, an administrator/senator who had direct interests in the decision could recuse her/himself from the process. But what if she/he served as the UEPC chair? Just such a case recently arose.

Finally, to those who are concerned that the resignation of administrators from the Senate and/or the elimination of their eligibility means that SIUC administrators would be disenfranchised, I remind you that the Administrative/Professional Council represents their interests well. Administrators ought to play a role in the Faculty Senate as *ex officio* members rather than as voting Senators, committee chairs, officers, and Executive Council members.

It has been a privilege serving in this esteemed body. I urge you and our colleagues to continue to work to ensure that the faculty play a meaningful role in the shared governance of SIUC.

Cheers,
Rob Benford
Faculty Senate President 2005-06