

**Faculty Advisory Committee to the IBHE - July 7, 2009**

The committee met in May, at which time he agreed to serve as vice chair. Another meeting was held on July 7 to discuss whether the FAC could have a more effective strategy to influence higher education policy. The group's primary direction in the past was to offer advice and attempt to influence the BHE itself. Over the last six or so years, the BHE has lost some of its influence in the direction of higher education policy. There are a couple of reasons for that. For five years, the chairman of the Board did Governor Blagojevich's bidding. The Governor wanted our budgets down, so the chair would propose no budget more than the Governor told him to ask for. Blagojevich has since left, and we have a new Board chairman. She is much better, but the damage was done. The executive director of the Board staff in the past was always a higher ed person, someone well versed in higher ed policy. That has not been true for the last five years.

We have a political appointment now as the executive director. A lot of the Board's influence was because they recommended funding for new programs under the RAMP projects. Now there is no new money for RAMP projects, and it has been quite a while since any RAMP project was funded. So, we decided to focus more of our efforts outside of the Board. They will continue to talk with the Board, but they are going to try and influence more the people in Springfield that have the actual ability to influence policy through funding. The FAC will try and portray themselves as the voice of the faculty of higher education. Of all the groups that seem to descend upon Springfield, the faculty does not really get represented. Legislators and office holders see university administrators and their staffs, who tend to get themselves in trouble every once in a while. Keep in mind that in today's climate, legislators are looking for reasons to cut you. When administrators get themselves in trouble, they are giving the officials a reason to cut them.

The other groups that a lot of the legislators and administrators are seeing are the union reps or the lobbyists for the unions. They tend to be viewed as one-dimensional, and that one dimension is "give us more money and benefits." They do not really talk about policy, so that is what we hope to do; let them see us as just the regular faculty at the university and what our concerns are. We are all concerned about funding, but there are other things that concern us as well, and that is what we are going to try and do.

With respect to the state budget itself, he has no clue what will happen; it is a total mess. As of the other day, we had no operational budget for the state. The Governor vetoed the funding bills. The legislature is back in session beginning today, and legislative leaders and the Governor were supposed to meet last night, but that meeting was cancelled. So there are a couple of possibilities of what could happen. There could be a five month budget passed, i.e., they will fund us for five months probably at the current levels and then come back and see if they can deal with the rest of the year. They could pass a full year budget based on the current revenues. If that happens, there could be dramatic cuts because there is not enough money. We could go on a month-to-month budget where they do one month resolutions. We have had some experience with that in the past. Our elected officials are showing no courage at all. The Democrats, although they have control, are afraid to vote for a tax increase for fear the Republicans will turn around and use it against them in the elections. So, they decided to go into overtime, which would mean they would need a super majority to pass a tax increase. The thought was they could not get slammed for voting for a tax increase if the Republicans did also. Well, the Republicans were afraid to vote for a tax increase for fear they would get primary election opposition. So, that is the reasoning behind this five-month budget so that when they come back, it will be in the veto session, which is after the filing date. If they do not have real strong opposition, then they figure they can cast a worry-free vote for a tax increase. How it will turn out, though, he does not know.

The Governor did sign the capital bill. It has been about nine years since we have had one. The Transportation Center, the rest of Morris Library and the Communications Building are included in the bill. There are also some deferred maintenance funds, so the university gets some big chunks of money that will contribute to the economy as well because of construction jobs. The capital budget does not help us on the operational side, so the only thing we have protecting us is that they have to appropriate x number of dollars in order to qualify for the stimulus funds. The budget that passed originally that was vetoed had that in it, and that is why we got that small increase; they had to go that high to get the stimulus money from Washington. Hopefully, they will not cut education so much that they lose that money.