

March Senate Report

The Faculty Advisory council met with the full Illinois Board of Higher Education at National Louis University in Chicago before their February meeting. Board Chair Carrie Hytman was unable to attend, but in her absence we had a very open and encouraging meeting. By and large the board members were aware of and sympathetic with the pressures faculty are operating under, including the attacks on pension benefits, budget cutbacks and conflicting demands on student performance. For instance, we are being asked to be more inclusive—Give first generation and students with a disadvantaged background a chance to enter college and earn a degree. Then those schools that do that as part of their mission get hammered for poor retention and graduation rates. We struggle to a degree with that dichotomy, but really schools like Northeastern and Chicago State have a much tougher road. These issues need to be dealt with, the board members agree before we can move to any kind of performance funding model. The current thought going forward is that any performance funding model would be based on how well each school is doing compared to its past history—Are you doing better today vs. how you did in the past.

Another issue that keeps coming up (and really this is more with the board staff as opposed to the board members) is the issue of program inventory. Legislators ask board staff all the time-What programs have been shut down? Staff members are advising us that we are better to take a look at program inventories ourselves rather than have the state do it for us. That way when the call comes for program reduction we can say, thank you but we already did that. We can make much better decisions than someone can from afar. And perhaps we can find some pain free options. University of Illinois is already doing this. They are talking about eliminating or suspending their aviation program. So again, I ask the Senate to revisit our process and be ready to consider a few program eliminations.