

Faculty Senate Report-November 12

Since my last report, the FAC met twice, first at Moraine Valley CC, near Chicago and then at Danville CC, in Danville.

At Moraine Valley we had retiring Senator Maloney chair of the higher education committee, and Representative Robert Pritchard. Both of these men are pro higher ed, and time was spent speculating what will happen to the Senate higher ed committee (it will have significant turnover) and how to influence policy and appropriations as we go forward. Both legislators stressed the need to bring legislators to campus. Most have little connection to a four year school. They both endorsed the concept of Universities copying the Farm Bureau's adopt a legislator program. Find a legislator (or two) with no University in their district and invite them to campus to show them what we are doing and how appropriation cuts are affecting what we can do. Let them meet faculty so they know we are not villains. This might be a good idea for the Senate and Grad Council to get together and consider a program like this. Both of the legislators commented that many of the newer members come in with biases and misunderstandings and need to be educated. There is great budget competition—lots of needs and not enough money. Need all the friends we can get.

At Danville, the FAC met with State Representative Chad Hays (R-104th district) (An SIU grad), member of the higher ed committee and State Senator Michael Frerichs, who is likely to succeed Maloney as chair of the Senate's higher ed committee. Hays echoed what was said about the adopt a legislator program from the last meeting. Said there is fierce competition for the budget dollars and many legislators have no face to put to higher education. Frerichs says we need to think of legislators as rather provincial. Every legislative district benefits from higher education. Use your alumni base and point out the benefits of higher education to legislators without universities in their districts.

A giant elephant in the room at both meetings was the pension issue. All of them said something needs to be done—it is eating all the revenue. There is disagreement about what to do however. For example Representative Hays said they shouldn't alter the rules for retirees or those soon to retire. There is a difference in funding between the Chicago school pensions and those in the rest of the state. He is concerned about the proposed tradeoff between the cost of living adjustment and health care coverage; this is problematic and probably unconstitutional. He'd like to see all stakeholders at the table to craft a solution. There is considerable opposition to the cost shift as well—we are the only sector that does not have taxing power. K-12 systems and CCs would need to increase property taxes. This is definitely an issue you should be communicating with your legislators about.

Two last items. George Reid, Executive director of the IBHE, decided to return to Maryland to be with his family and took at position with the American Association of State colleges and universities. He has been replaced on an interim basis by Harry Berman, who is retired from UIS where he was provost and interim Chancellor. A full search will be initiated after the first of the year with the hope of having a permanent Executive Director in place by the beginning of the fiscal year.

MAP Taskforce—Tasked with looking at how to improve the MAP programs effectiveness. Community Colleges ended up having lots of representation on the task force and they are pushing for the carve out they had legislation on last spring. In other words reserve \$50,000,000 of MAP funds for CC students who they argue apply late and get frozen out. This is not a good proposal for our students. It will simply increase the number of our students who do not get a grant although they qualify for it. Watch for this in the Spring session and let your legislator know you are against it.