

Faculty Assembly Report January 18, 2013

Recent events have quite probably made this report on the Faculty Assembly's Jan. 18 meeting, which was entirely dedicated to addressing the UNC 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, largely obsolete, but the following may serve to contextualize somewhat those events. On Wednesday, Jan. 23, the Advisory Committee approved the draft without modifications, and it will go to the Board of Governors (BoG) this week for approval. Also after our FA meeting, the Association of Student Governments (ASG) and the Staff Assembly have endorsed the FA resolutions, as have the Faculty Senates of the several UNC campuses that have met since Jan. 18.

I. President Ross's Report:

First, in his comments, President Ross reiterated a number of points he had emphasized previously: that the UNC system is required to produce cyclically a Strategic Plan, that the reason for the speed with which this is being done was so that the BoG could have it by the end of January in order to present it, in support of UNC's budget priorities, to the Governor and the new legislature before they begin this budget cycle. He is aware of complaints that this procedure is much more "top down" than UNC-Tomorrow, but noted that UNC-T was unusually inclusive, and that the current plan builds on that document.

The Q&A period reflected many of the concerns that we would later incorporate into our resolutions:

- Whether or not the proposed commonalities in GE requirements and transferability would lead to a common system-wide set of GE requirements:

President Ross stated that, while there are some on the BoG who would like to see that, the GA view is that we move to competencies-based requirements; i.e., common goals but not common courses. This would allow for greater transferability.

- Whether or not the BoG understands that SACS requires faculty control of the curriculum:

While perhaps not all on the BoG understand that, the GA understands.

- Whether or not the centrality of each campus' mission would be respected; what the effect of targeting certain research areas would have on other research; how free MOOCs would be paid for and what would their effect be on other funding

President Ross responded that priorities don't mean we quit doing what we're doing, they just mean targeted investments in those areas. Research in every field is very important if you want scholars teaching your students, and it supplies the depth component of their education. While he did not respond specifically to MOOC funding, he affirmed that special fees for on-line courses were to be eliminated.

- Doubts that "rain makers" produce revenue in excess of start-up and other costs:

President Ross objected to the term, stressing that the practice proposed would be to target key people whose expertise would pull together and complete inter-campus research teams in the priority areas

- Noting the omnipresent use of action verbs in the document, concern was expressed at the enormous amount of administrative costs needed to create new policies, procedures, etc.

President Ross responded that you can't have action without action verbs, and that someone has to implement the plans.

II. Report of Leslie Boney, VP International, Community, and Economic Engagement: Regional Listening Sessions with Businesses:

Listening Sessions with business leaders were held across the state to hear what their needs were from UNC. They found that the business community

- Expressed educational outcome needs comparable to those of the most recent CCL Survey: a change from technical mastery to adaptability, "T-shaped" people who can think in new directions.
- Believes higher degree attainment rates are desirable
- Called for the identification of research areas in which faculty from multiple campuses were interested that coincided with economic priorities.

As a result, the two resulting UNC goals proposed are: to support game-changing research and scholarship and to convert discovery into innovation.

III. Report of Drew Moretz, VP for State Government Relations: an overview of legislative Long Session, Legislative Day, and Training.

He noted that legislators are now “ramping up,” hiring staff, and that the process would take longer than normal due to the unusually large change in leadership; hence, the Governor may not propose a budget until March instead of February. The unemployment money owed to the federal government will be crucial, and tax reform will be one of the first priorities. Parts of the Strategic Plan calling for efficiencies will therefore likely be retained. He noted the need to find champions among the new legislators, and discussed the “Lobbying 101” handout provided to the Assembly, urging faculty to get involved in Legislative Day, but first to contact their campus legislative liaison to hear where the representatives stand.

IV. Charlie Perusse, Chief Operating Officer. Discussion of the University Budget

Overall, the economy “is good, not great,” state revenues are as forecasted, and no reversions are currently anticipated. Growth is at 3-4%, less than the 5-6% historically, but better than in recent years. Gov. McCrory is at work on the budget, expected to be sent to the legislature in mid-March.

UNC continuation budgets are done and include enrollment increases, building requests, etc. Expansion budget recommendations will be presented to General Assembly in the next couple of meetings, to include: proposals in Strategic Plan, increases in state retirement contribution, financial aid and individual campus requests, greater carry-over retention and flexibility, and reduction options reflected in strategic plan (e.g., administrative efficiencies).

V. SUMMARY: Since links to the Chair of the Faculty Assembly’s response letter and the body’s resolutions were made available on-line, the following is a very condensed version of the FA’s concerns regarding the Strategic Plan expressed at the meeting:

METHODOLOGY: Although the plan suggests that the proposed strategies are data-driven (page 2), many of the proposals are based on assumptions that are not supported by research data—or are in opposition to it. The facts do not drive the outcomes. For example, what current or historical data support the assertions that e-Learning is less expensive than face-to-face, on campus delivery of curriculum; or that MOOCs are effective ways to ensure student learning, etc.?

INSTRUCTION: The Faculty Assembly is very concerned about the insufficient acknowledgment that faculty have primary responsibility for design, delivery, and assessment of the curriculum, and the risk our campuses run of losing accreditation if this faculty oversight is lacking.

The Faculty Assembly is alarmed by the recommendation to use standardized exams such as the CLA, as they provide little or no new information and are costly.

The Faculty Assembly is concerned that the e-Learning section of the draft does not adequately address issues such as cost, who evaluates instructor qualifications, and the identification of appropriate e-learning student populations based on past success rates.

RESEARCH: The plan notes that there are 17 constituent institutions, but it fails to recognize the unique mission of each of the universities. Similarly, it fails to capture the variety of research and scholarship underway on our campuses and the impact it has on education and the state.

There is no research to support the conclusion that the economic benefits of hiring “rainmakers” outweigh the cost in start-up and support funds.

RESOURCES: While there is much focus on increasing attainment goals, the plan does not realistically resource the expansion of enrollments necessary to meet its long-term goals.

The plan acknowledges the constitutional mandate to keep costs as low as possible, but it does not address how the financial needs of the students will be met.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dale Knickerbocker, Faculty Assembly Representative