Members Present: Dana Edwards, Kris Erway, Karina Garbesi, Armando Gonzales, Dave Larson, José A. López (Chair), Nancy Mangold, Saeid Motavalli, Don Sawyer, Bruce Trumbo

Members Absent: None

Visitors: Sam Basu, Cal Caplan, Stanley Clark, Norma S. Rees, Dave Travis

1. Agenda approved with no additions. M/S (Sawyer/Motavalli)

2. Approval of the minutes of the November 5, 2004 meeting

   Approved as corrected. M/S (Larson/Garbesi)

3. Report of the Chair

   López reminded everyone that communication of Academic Senate documents, such as Committee agendas and meeting minutes, are routinely distributed via email rather than via campus mail. Approved COBRA meeting minutes are posted on the Academic Senate’s web page. Regarding COBRA and CAPR coordination with the Academic Senate, López and Wort will attend EXCOM meetings and also meet every other Friday. López would eventually like to have a mid-year COBRA report ready for presentation to EXCOM.

   López then distributed a handout excerpted from the California Legislative Analyst’s Office, which projects a year-end budget shortfall of $6.7 billion in 2005-06. Rees stated that the LAO report made mention of tax increases. She mentioned the recent Impact Study which speaks favorably of the CSU’s contributions to the State, illustrating the multiple positive effects of the CSU, which can have a powerful impact on others at an opportune time.

   Clark said that according to reliable sources, the shortfall, predicted at $3 billion a month ago, has now more than doubled, and will likely change again as time passes. There is some optimism to be gained from the fact that Tom Campbell, who has a sound knowledge of education issues, has been appointed as the Governor’s Budget Advisor.

   López distributed a list from President Rees listing some of her major concerns which she had spoken about in the previous COBRA meeting. This list is neither
comprehensive nor in any particular order, but one might note that enrollment issues are clustered at the top. Rees said that her hope is that COBRA will embrace thinking of these kind of issues for the University as a whole, so as not to get overly distracted into areas of narrow scope.

In beginning a discussion of COBRA goals for the current year, López distributed a presumed final version of the COBRA Objectives document, and gave thanks to Garbesi for her work on it. The Committee examined the textual changes in the document. Regarding Goal Area 2 (Promoting Faculty Involvement in the Budget Development Process at the College, Dept. and Program Levels), Basu stressed that COBRA would need to discuss the issues with each College Dean. Trumbo suggested adding “long-term” to the heading “Recovery Plan” comprising Goal Area 3. Rees reminded the Committee that other groups on campus are working on recovery plans, and that the WASC Report is expected to be the kickoff to the next phase of the University’s long range plan. Brauer and Rees are working together in this area. It important that COBRA assist with recovery planning, but not simply duplicate the work of others. It was mentioned that other CSU campuses are using the term recovery, but often in names such as “5-year recovery” and so on. López motioned to approve the Goals document. M/S Sawyer/Garbesi

4. Goals—Ad Hoc Committee Progress Reports

López will place on future meeting agendas reports of the ad hoc subcommittees. Caplan stressed that if the subcommittees are ad hoc, then they must include “ad hoc” in their title. Motavalli asked if the ad hoc subcommittees could begin contacting individuals for membership or information purposes. Wort has already done so. Sawyer said that after the ad hoc subcommittees establish their work plans, it will become clearer who they may want to contact or work with. López said that non-COBRA members can be involved, and non-faculty can serve wherever appropriate. Edwards asked if there were any requirements regarding membership on the ad hoc subcommittees. López said that there are none, and that the ad hoc subcommittees can coordinate meetings with individuals as necessary. Trumbo said that anyone who wants to give input should be able to do so, via email or personal contact. If the different ad hoc groups want to meet with Deans and campus Administrators, López will coordinate these meetings where possible.

Discussion about the time frame for a COBRA report to EXCOM and/or the Academic Senate ensued. Garbesi asked if January might be an appropriate time to meet with the Senate to give input and get feedback. López wants to meet with EXCOM to give a report on COBRA plans before any presentation to the Senate.

Sawyer mentioned the slowness of the hiring process for the new faculty positions that were approved for this year. There was general consensus that this process should be accelerated if possible. Rees stated that while positions can be anticipated, they do not automatically result from separations, and that final budget numbers are
necessary before determining how many positions can be approved for hiring. Clark has been in discussion with the Deans about the speed of the hiring process. The Deans have received input from the faculty, and Clark will be meeting with the Deans on Monday to address these issues. Sawyer and CAPR are being updated about the progress of these discussions, and a set of recommendations will come out of this process. One way to look at improving this process would be to keep in mind the timeframe of the budget. Separations are a known factor, and anticipation of some number of new positions can result in Colleges prioritizing their greatest needs in advance. Rees supported this suggestion and spoke of the length of time taken by Departments to organize search committees this year. Larson recommended that Departments which are likely to receive approval for new hires select search committees in the Spring Quarter which should be ready to begin work immediately in the Fall Quarter, even though final approval for all positions may not be forthcoming. Clark said that the Deans may come up with more suggestions for improving the process. Caplan spoke about the importance of having the job descriptions prepared and approved in advance. Clark said that while Departments can not be certain of final approval, they can have a good idea of the number of new positions by late March, and that the key point is that certain things can be done in the Spring. Trumbo spoke of the need to have job descriptions ready to go for inclusion in appropriate publications, in time for professional conferences, at which contacts and interviewing take place. López thanked the Provost’s Office for expediting hiring. Trumbo seconded this appreciation.

5. New Business

López invited Clark to discuss a Memorandum discussing a Task Force on Faculty Support Services, which was distributed. Rees had suggested that Clark discuss this plan with COBRA. The Deans++ mentioned in the Memorandum are the individuals who report directly to Clark, with the exception of Mack Lovett, who is included. The genesis for this Task Force was a request brought before the Deans++ by Julie Glass, John Charles, and Roger Parker to consider looking into the various faculty support services to identify duplication and to explore streamlining and improvement of services, including centralizing or decentralizing as necessary. The campus units listed in the document were suggested by these individuals: Clark added the text “any other relevant unit.” The focus is to look at the cost of the delivery of these services, to determine if there are better ways to deliver them, and to coordinate efforts. Clark will keep COBRA informed of the progress of the Task Force. Trumbo and Sawyer expressed appreciation for the formation of this Task Force.

López asked if representatives of the enrollment units might address the list of concerns expressed by Rees. Rees stressed enrollment issues as a highest priority. If the increase in next year’s budget for enrollment (about 3%) is implemented, a new University enrollment target will be issued. Enrollment at the Contra Costa Campus is part of this priority. In relation to enrollment is of course student retention. Increasing enrollments result in larger budgets which in turn result in greater faculty hiring. It is important that COBRA communicate the priority for enrollment growth whenever
possible. It is also crucial for the University to expand its community connections. Faculty can assist tremendously in this area, but it is often overlooked. There are tremendous potential benefits for the University when faculty make community connections.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:52 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Edwards, Secretary