Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, Tuesday, March 3, 2009

Members present: Jennifer Eagan, Karina Garbesi, Julie Glass, Susan Gubernat, Rita Liberti, Jane Lopus, Sally Murphy, Susan Opp, Henry Reichman, Jeffery Seitz

Members absent: Mo Qayoumi

Guests: Deidre Badejo, Carl Bellone, Chris Brown, Kevin Callahan, John Charles, Raechelle Clemmons, Linda Dalton, Robert Gibson, James Mitchell, James Murphy, Glen Perry, Don Sawyer, Arthurlene Towner, Mitch Watnik, Rhea Williamson

1. Approval of the agenda

M/S/P (Garbesi/Gubernat) to approve the agenda.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting on 2-24-09

The minutes were not yet available.

3. Visit with Trustees Carol Chandler and George Gowgani

The trustees were introduced, and each member of Excom introduced themselves. The Trustees had just come from a discussion about online education with the President and others. It was noted that not all departments are taking the same approach to online learning nor adopting it at the same levels.

Excom members were asked to describe the characteristics they felt distinguished CSUEB.

- CSUEB has been a leader, with support from the President and others, in providing strategic input in research and teaching to help the state meet its very aggressive environmental mandates. CSUEB is coordinating emissions control across system by working to gain energy efficiency, installing solar panels, etc.
- At CSUEB students receive a very personal experience in terms of the time and attention of the faculty. CSUEB has been successful up to now in keeping class sizes low which, for some students, makes the difference between staying in college and dropping out.
- STEM education efforts were mentioned as another area of distinction. The Trustees had an earlier presentation regarding efforts in this area.
- CSUEB’s Online degree completion programs were praised.
- CSUEB has a very active and engaged student leadership team in ASI.
- Excom members recalled that the last time Trustee Chandler visited, the campus was a very different place. There is a sense on the campus that the new administration has provided strong leadership and is helping the campus evolve. Some of the ideas currently being implemented had long existed on campus, but it took the right leadership and vision to get the campus moving. Examples of positive change include: improvement in enrollment with plans in place to maintain growth, a very positive WASC accreditation, an increased number of Tenure Track Faculty, and the new dining hall, which moved very quickly from concept to reality. It was generally felt that the Trustee’s review of the President was accepted as accurate by the faculty despite a somewhat negative article in school paper.

There was concern expressed that the current fiscal environment may halt and/or reverse the positive direction in which the campus is currently moving.

One particular area of negative impact from the budget has been campus remediation rates. The budget is forcing departments to increase capacities in developmental courses among other money saving strategies. It was felt that this would result in lower pass rates, higher drop rates, and ultimately lower retention and/or greater time to degree. This is especially discouraging because it comes at a time that our freshman class is growing.
The Trustees noted that they understand and are sympathetic to the budgetary constraints being placed on the campuses. They noted that CSUEB is in a good position by having a President who has the trust, confidence, and respect of the Board of Trustees. It was suggested that support for the president and cooperation from the faculty would be a good strategy.

Trustee Gowgani noted that the first priority has to be the students, second is the interests of the institution as a whole. He also explained that the likelihood that funds from the state will grow to such an extent as to support the institution fully is very unlikely. He felt that the CSU and CSUEB need to move to alternative funding sources by turning to external grant funds and greater efforts by Advancement. Some statistics were given as to the percentages of funds that come from external sources across the CSU and UCs. Excom was urged to support our colleagues who are making efforts in this area. It was pointed out that obtaining grant funds at a CSU is substantially more challenging than at the UCs.

Difficulty in changing funding structures is especially difficult because of the 2/3 majority required to make budget changes in the state. It was suggested that the CSU, CFA, and Board of Trustees work together to help legislators overturn this requirement. It was pointed out that even without this requirement, funding will/would be tight because there simply is no money. It was felt that some budget stability would be of great benefit. CSU budgets fluctuate as the California budget cycles every few years but each time there is a down cycle, there is no recovery of the lost funds. This continual downward trend is troubling. It makes it difficult to retain even the most dedicated faculty who may find opportunities elsewhere.

As funding decreases, course offerings shrink, less experienced part-time lecturers are hired, students cannot get the classes they need, and time to graduation increases. It was felt by some that online education may address some problems with access and efficiency, though it was acknowledged that it is not a silver bullet. It was pointed out that online education does not address issues of workload. Caution was also urged that online classes don’t simply draw students away from on-ground courses. The hope is, rather, that online courses will draw new students who will engage either fully online or both on-ground and online.

The administration was praised for budget transparency.

The Trustees and the Chancellor’s Office were urged by ExCom to explore creative solutions to dwindling resources, possibly including fee structure changes that are not tied as strongly to class standing or number of units, as the community colleges do. This approach could address financial issues as well as educational issues such as time to graduation.

The Trustees were also urged to look into issues surrounding accreditation at the college level. The example of AACSB accreditation and its impact on the operations of the College of Business and Economics. AACSB is pushing very hard on faculty scholarship which puts faculty in a difficult situation, creating two classes of faculty, and two levels of student learning. AACSB appears to care less about producing students who can write than having faculty who publish. If the CSU worked together to pressure AACSB on this issue, it might be possible to get the priorities changed. It was further noted that accreditation used to be every 10 years and now is every 5 years. An informal survey of undergraduate students by one faculty member revealed very little awareness, understanding, or perceived importance placed on accreditation.

There was a brief discussion about articulation with community colleges and it was noted that some new programs are being created in collaboration/consultation with the community colleges. There has been more transfer agreement activity.

On a positive note, CSUEB held a successful and lively forum/presentation sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program. The Program Director met with student leaders in advance and the meeting was well attended, and included strongly but respectfully voiced opinions.

Appreciation was expressed all around.

4. Reports

A. Report of the Chair
   – The Faculty Honors Convocation was a successful celebration, with good turnout, in honor of the faculty. Thanks to those who attended.
ExCom minutes 3-3-09

– Construction on the new Student Services and Administration Building will resume when weather permits.
– Excom will receive updates as more budget information becomes available. There is some hope that the federal stimulus money will have some effect.
– UPABC will meet this Friday at 10AM in the President’s Conference Room. That meeting, as with all UPABC meetings, is open to all.

B. Report of the President
The President and Provost were with the Trustees.

C. Report of the Statewide Academic Senators
ASCSU will meet at end of March.

4. Appointments
None at this time.

5. Appointment of the Search Committee for the GE Director/Coordinator for 09-12 term
The following nominations were made: Carl Bellone, Jim Mitchell, Margaret Rustick.
M/S/P (Seitz/Garbesi) to appoint these nominees as the search committee for the GE Director/Coordinator.

6. 08-09 CIC 16, Prerequisite Policy for Upper Division, Graduate and GE Courses
M/S (Murphy/Seitz) to place on the Senate Agenda. The following concerns were raised: GE requirements impacting students’ ability to enroll in upper division courses in their own discipline that they do not intend to count for GE credit; introducing prerequisites for graduate courses/programs despite the stated intention of enforcing GE prerequisites only; the inability of PeopleSoft to enforce prerequisites; and the potential for requiring numerous over-rides at the department level. There was concern about the consultation process and a feeling that Chairs should have been specifically consulted, although the CIC Chair noted that chairs receive the agendas and had the opportunity to attend. It was also pointed out that this document had been circulated many times and input on all CIC documents is always welcomed and encouraged. The goal of requiring that lower division GE within a designation be completed before moving to upper division was reiterated. There was concern that the document and its requirements were excessively complex. It was noted that the goal will be for PS to have a “popup” that reminds students about lower division GE prerequisite requirements. So, while PS will not block enrollment, it will play a gate-keeping role. There are ways to accomplish this that would not require departments to submit numerous course modifications in order to include the prerequisites.

The question was called.

The motion to place on the senate agenda passed on a vote of 5 for, 3 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

7. Textbook Affordability Plan (Brown)
A presentation was given outlining several possible plans that would potentially reduce text book costs for our students. It was first explained that bringing Follett in to run the bookstore had already resulted in reduced costs to students because the Follett is a larger company which charges a 26% markup while the prior markup had been 29%. Five strategies were presented. They were margin reduction (which is already in place with the Follett Contract), using custom publications, a text book rental program, increasing the used book ratio to 40%, and using more digital materials. Strategies 2 – 5 would all involve some advance planning and/or commitment on the part of the faculty involved. Custom and rental text programs require long term commitment to a text while increasing the used book ratio would require early adoptions in order that the bookstore have time to secure used texts. Scenarios and/or examples were given for each strategy demonstrating the potential savings. It was noted that if a student purchases an electronic text they may have access only for the relevant term, or for a longer period. It depends on the publisher.
The restructuring described here came as a result of a planning process to address the anticipated cuts to the base budget for IT in the coming fiscal year. In order to accommodate the decrease in funds IT must shed costs by becoming more efficient and more effective. The goal was to strike the right balance of shedding costs without causing too much pain. In the legacy environment a lot of things were done at the desktop level. With tools today these same tasks can be managed automatically, remotely and centrally, which reduces costs. A team including Michael Clay, Raechelle Clemmons, and Roger Parker is working with the colleges to do the required restructuring to implement some of these tools. Also in the past each College has had an IT team with staff members providing generalized support for desktops, servers, labs, etc. In the new model, staff will be organized by function and/or expertise rather than location and some services will be “virtualized”. This will lead to increased efficiency as well as better service because those working in a particular area will have the appropriate expertise. An example of “virtualizing” was given. If the university had 10 site licenses for a specialized piece of software, the software would be loaded onto 10 machines. Students could then sign up for particular time periods during which they could log in remotely to those machines and use the software. This would increase access and allow more students to utilize the required software more conveniently. The plan is to move to the new structure in a three stage process. The first stage will be the development of transition teams focusing on desktops, learning spaces and servers. The second phase will begin in the summer and the third stage will occur next year with IT putting in place ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) best practices by the end of 09-10. Deans will be recommending interested faculty members to participate in a task force for the transition phase, working out some of the specialized service areas. Ultimately, through the formal consultation process, these ideas will be brought to the Faculty Support Services Advisory Committee and UIT to vet them. The new approach for funding in the new budget will have more of a one size fits all feel. However, IT is cognizant that there are some services that are specific and tightly linked to instruction. A plan has been worked out with the Cabinet to ensure that these types of services are funded via using some of the “computing refresh program” funds. It was noted that the refresh program would move to a model of replacing only those machines most in need of replacement, rather than pro-rata. It was noted that first faculty machines are purchased with one-time funds and that new staff take over old computers. On the server side, IT will move as quickly as possible to virtualize and consolidate servers in order to drive down costs. While it was acknowledged that it would not be possible to provide a staff phone-in service across the board, there will be a mechanism for instructors in immediate need of support during classroom instruction to have access to phone support. In addition, there will be a point person for every college.

9. Continuing Remediation discussion and possible Remedial Course Designations

Postponed.

10. Continuation of the discussion of the ASCSU discrimination resolution

Postponed.

11. Adjournment

M/S/P (Glass/Murphy) to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Glass, Secretary