Officer Musings

October 3, 2013

This week’s Executive Committee meeting was interesting, to say the least. During the 15 minute open discussion we expressed  concern over the manner in which chairpersons are counted in the faculty-student ratios. We expressed concern that faculty with “other” assignments might dominate the list of those receiving performance-related increases. We expressed concern that the by-the-course faculty are not receiving any adjustments; and we expressed concern at the confusion related to the bookstore ordering process. We did agree with the administration on the composition of the departmental success taskforce, and expressed appreciation over the cooperation received when the committee was formed.

There were other agenda items as well. We received a SAC report on the composition of the Student Success Council. No action was taken because FAC was also charged with this issue and we will take action when we have their view. From Beth Whitaker were heard about the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence and its plans for the year as well as the national search they will be conducting for a permanent director. We took up policy changes offered by the Graduate Council regarding Graduate Faculty status for multi-year non-tenure track faculty. We also approved the changes to the College of Nursing, Health and Human Services’ Constitution.

On the subject of student faculty ratios, there still exists confusion on who counts, and how, in this data.  Discussions are to be held quickly to resolve this issue. We may have reason to be concerned but don’t have the level of certainty that we like to have before staking out a position.  We are looking into it with appropriate seriousness and will say more when we have all the facts.  With hope, a reasonable solution will emerge.

Concern was expressed regarding whether faculty who have “other” assignments (other than teaching, research, and service) would be getting raises from the faculty pool. It appears that faculty who have those “other” assignments are getting very high evaluations in the “other” areas and are being teed up for raises. We were assured that this would only be true for “others” at the chairperson/director level. In other words, EAPs would not get money from this pool but that chairpersons/directors might.

Concern was also raised regarding the Senate discussion of raises for by-the-course adjuncts. The previous provost’s justification for not granting raises to these faculty was that they signed contracts in August for the year and those contracts stood. This administration is, seemingly, open to raising the floor for the by-the-course faculty from the $1,000 per credit hour to an amount adjusted annually by the across-the-board increase amount. That would only exist, though, for rehires the following August. No commitment was made but we will continue to press this issue.

Finally, concern was expressed regarding the faculty newsletter regarding textbook orders and why we were ordering texts this new way only to have to order our texts through our chairpersons starting in January. The provost indicated he understood why there would be confusion but noted that the policy was to start January 1 and that though the administration hopes faculty will order books according to the newly adopted policy, it will not be enforced actively until January.

Regarding the Departmental Success Taskforce, we negotiated a membership that we believe encompasses our joint interests with the administration that the result of the taskforce be accepted by faculty, the administration, and the Board… with each having potentially different points of view. Our nominees (the Provost and Psychology Chairperson Sheets as committee co-chairs, Dean K. Hill-Clarke, Executive Director of Nursing L. Hall, Chairpersons J. Conant, P. Schikora, and C. Olsen, and faculty members C. MacDonald, D. Malooley, C. DePaolo, L. Eberman, and K. Yousif)  bring a wealth of experience and are appropriately balanced across the colleges. We sought and found faculty who are very well respected.  We worked hard to balance the needs to have some faculty with many years of experience as chairpersons with faculty who have many more years ahead of them at ISU than behind them. Because of the balance we achieved, we expect that they will produce proposals that will be thoughtful and forward-looking and that the proposals will not burden future generations of faculty and departments with onerous procedures.  Steve, as well as other chairs, understand the need for metric comparisons, but the report generation for some domains is dampening vigor and productivity. The new requirements must be essential and informative.