

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

University Assembly Meeting

Friday, August 16, 2007

2:00 p.m.

Dickinson Hall Auditorium

MINUTES

I. Call to order

President Richard Ford called the meeting of the University Assembly to order at 2:03 pm. A quorum was present.

Ford welcomed the members of the Assembly to the new academic year.

Ford noted that he thought he had made it through the first year of his sentence "without too many mess-ups" thanks largely to the Faculty Senate executive committee.

II. Review of minutes

Motion and second to accept the minutes of the April 26, 2007, meeting of the University Assembly. There being no additions or corrections, the motion carried.

III. Teaching Academy directors

President Ford thanked the administration for its support of the new initiative in teaching. He introduced the three directors of the new Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence, Dave McAlpine, Michael Kleine, and Carol Thompson.

Thompson talked about how she was prepared for the teaching of her first class by being told the days, time, and place it would meet. We can and must do better, she said, observing that centers for excellence in teaching abound across the country these days.

She briefly recounted the history of ours: Ford and Ramsey came back excited from a trip to a teaching camp in northwest Arkansas. They assembled a group of professors who met weekly over the last academic year and began to craft a proposal to administration for a teaching academy for UALR.

This is, she emphasized, a peer-to-peer institution, and the mission is to foster excellence in teaching and learning, to demonstrate the value UALR places on high-quality teaching, and to build a stronger community among teachers and learners. The workgroup has also developed a proposed statement of philosophy, a framework in which teachers and students work together to construct the learning experience. "All faculty must become part of the teaching community, of the entire enterprise of learning, scholarship, and teaching."

McAlpine spoke to budget and longer-term goals. The workgroup had requested \$200,000, and were funded at the \$50,000 level, with the three directors on quarter-time release. They will hire two graduate assistants: one an information-technology

person, the other to deal with the public and arrangements. They want to bring in Ken Bain if possible, and are working on how to fund the actual teaching academy next summer out of next year's budget.

They're looking for a centrally located, tech-ready place to hold the academy. Meantime, the directors may be found at Denny's every Tuesday morning from 8:30 until 9:30. They wish to reestablish a sense of community among faculty, and also to establish a teaching library. They asked each discipline on campus to send the directors a copy of the leading book on teaching in that field. They'd like to archive all the articles written by UALR faculty about teaching. A goal is to begin publication of a teaching journal.

Kleine spoke of activities planned for the coming year, reinforcing the teachers-teaching-teachers approach. There will be a series of teaching demonstrations, workshops, and roundtables, kicking off on Friday, Sept. 14, with a luncheon for one person from each department. On Sept. 28 will be a luncheon for the stakeholders' task force that got this initiative underway. In November, two workshops are scheduled, topics to be set in consultation with the faculty. In January, they hope to distribute Ken Bain's book, and have him here in one way or another, and in February have a set of group discussions. They're working toward a two-day teaching camp in the summer.

IV. Remarks by Provost David Belcher

The provost asked Jeanne Winston to demonstrate how to access and use the picture rosters of classes on BOSS, an innovation arranged by Computing Services at the request of President Ford.

Winston reminded faculty that students may request that information about them be held in confidence. She encouraged us to protect confidential information from disclosure.

The provost announced some new appointments: Jane Wayland, interim dean—and saint, he believes—of the College of Business, and Bob Sikes, interim dean of the Graduate School. ORSP this year will report to Sandra Robertson.

Last year, the provost said, was a very good year. Concurrent enrollment was one priority that got a lot of attention. He asked Cheatham, who has chaired the effort from the faculty's side, to give a quick report. Hall High, coordinated by Dhonau, and last year with ASMA. The ADHE policy, Cheatham said, is both permissive and prescriptive—and is prescriptive in ways that are important to us. Concurrent enrollment courses will be our courses, will be in ACTS, will use our textbooks, our exams, and be taught by faculty who meet our criteria. The policy is permissive in ways that present some challenges as well as opportunities. It permits a two-year period during which AP courses may be merged with our core courses. The people who are working on concurrent enrollment, including Tracy Johnson and her people in Computing Services have created a new "campus" in Banner that enables us to place high school students in the system in a way they won't get all those letters about money. She also praised the work of Student Services staff, and faculty in mathematics, biology, English, rhetoric, foreign languages, history, business, and speech. We have agreements this year with Hall; the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Science, and the Arts; Greenbrier; Benton; and Bryant. Her guess is that a year from now, the list will be significantly longer. The staff in off-campus programs have worked tirelessly to be sure the process maintains its integrity. She

invited Assembly members who know of other schools that might be good partners for us to alert

her. We're looking for fertile fields for recruitment of talented and capable students to the university.

The provost cited more highlights from last year: Lots of time on recruitment and retention. Foundations of Excellence study completed. Emergence of a faculty and staff task force on faculty roles and rewards, taking on a data-driven effort and making recommendations. Jump Start last spring, a great faculty- and staff-led effort to welcome students newly admitted to the university. Initiative begun to increase summer enrollment., with Aaron Baker, Kim Fox, others working on a quiet effort at carefully targeted marketing, and enrollment up by 267 students. This fall, we will assess what worked and what didn't.

The budget process last year was much more open and transparent, with wider and deeper participation by faculty, led by the Senate's Planning and Finance Committee.

A nanotechnology lab is established, and makes us a leader in the region. And we hired a number of superb new faculty members. He knows because he met them at orientation, and he suggested that they will knock our collective socks off.

In the coming year, the Tenure Committee will look at clarity and consistency of university policy on tenure and promotions. "Faculty Roles and Rewards II" will be established to look at nontenured faculty. Both align with the university's strategic plan.

Reaccreditation is on top of us. It presents opportunity—lots of opportunity—rather like drinking from a firehose, actually. There are a couple of others, but most importantly, there is our North Central reaccreditation. Susan Hoffpauir has the lead on this.

The provost announced his intention that we increase the number of certified teachers produced this year by forty percent. He has plans to visit every academic unit this year. He closed by saying, "There's going to be a lot going on: complex, detailed, and tedious; slick fun, and glitzy. Happy new year."

V. Remarks by Chancellor Joel Anderson

Before introducing the chancellor, President Ford spoke about the new tool for faculty in recruiting first-time students at UALR: the program for faculty-initiated scholarships of \$200-per-semester tuition reduction, which will, if the student remains enrolled for a full four years, amount to a \$1,600 scholarship. Laura Smoller has recruited the first student to receive an award from this program, and Ford hopes she will take on the role of mentor to this student, as we hope many other faculty will with those students they bring into the faculty-initiated scholarship program.

Chancellor Anderson acknowledged Communications for the fine new bumper and window stickers. He said he's also glad Ford has two pain-free knees, but had to observe that when he didn't, he was, perhaps, briefer.

The chancellor lauded the teaching academy's directors, especially McAlpine, for apparently realizing a 14% increase out of thin air. He thinks it bodes well for the Academy's future.

He welcomed new faculty most particularly, observing that they bring us a sense of renewal.

A theme he wants to sound in his remarks today—in light of the many planning initiatives we've had over the last few years—is that we are working the plans and following through.

An example is the Campus Master Plan, which called for us to develop Coleman Creek. The chancellor showed slides of the east end of Coleman Creek, where we have taken up the asphalt and taken down the buildings as an important step in the restoration. The effort is funded out of private contributions, including \$139K from FTN Associates, \$75K from Audubon Arkansas, \$30K from the Chamberlain Family Foundation.

The Chancellor reviewed development goals. We are committed to significant goals in increasing the number of graduates in nursing and teaching. Undergraduate six-year graduation rates are still dismal; we're last among the state four-year institutions and don't compare favorably with our peers nationally either.

Campus housing filled quickly, and that's great.

Our record on campus participation in the Campus Comprehensive Campaign is excellent. It's at 46%, and we want to push that past 50%. The dollar amount of gifts from faculty and staff is approaching \$400,000. Scholarships are up in amount and number. The first phase of ads will continue for a while, and then we'll go into a new phase that's much more student-oriented. We're still in the silent phase of the campaign, and the chancellor believes we're now at the starting point where many institutions want to be before they launch such a campaign publicly. We started a year and a half ago, before we had lots of things in place, and he's glad we did.

He mentioned the University District, and noted that it's clipping right along. The establishment of a community development corporation will be a next significant step.

Two units have been renamed this year: we now have a Center for Academic Success, and the Donaghey College of Engineering and Information Technology.

On September 11, at 3:00 in the Donaghey Student Center, we will release the student racial attitudes survey. Later, we will release the faculty and staff racial attitudes survey. We ought to be a notch or two better, the chancellor observed, and we appear to be moving in the right direction.

Enrollment will be an issue. He suspects we'll end up about where we were last year. We've had to run harder to stay even, and it's important that we keep the pace up. He reminded the Assembly that 49% of our budget is state appropriated, 39% is student tuition and fees, and that one is hitched to the other, in that our state appropriation hinges on enrollment. This is clearly an instance where quantity and quality go hand in hand. He noted that on-line courses have been our salvation. Concurrent enrollment is important to us, too, as a recruitment strategy.

The most important thing the chancellor wanted to say to the Assembly is that there's a new threat on the horizon, an impending change in the funding formula. How well a college or university turns its students into graduates will soon have a great deal to do with how we fund higher education in Arkansas. The state is going to start rewarding retention and graduation. The new approach came from the governor, one of the best champions of higher education in the state. Perhaps we can develop our significant advantage in graduating two-year transfers, but this is a big issue for us. May go to "course completers" rather than using 11th-day enrollment, which is likely to hurt us more than other schools. There will be attempts to set this up so that schools are competing with themselves, but it will still be a huge issue for us.

Rather than whine about it, the chancellor said, we should firmly ally ourselves with the governor and his position, because what he advocates is important. Anderson would reframe the undertaking as a military one: the hill we've been assigned to capture is tougher than other hills, but it's our job to do it. Be assured, he said, that Dr. Robertson and he will be diligently monitoring the progress toward specifics of a formula, working to keep them as favorable to us as possible. He suspects, when it comes down to it, our losses as a result of a new funding formula, will be more than we'd hoped, less than we'd feared. Advised us to ponder the work of Jim Collins, who cautions us about "obsessing over systemic constraints."

The chancellor concluded with two requests:

The first has to do with transfer students. In May 2006, he addressed this issue and the paradigm that has prevailed in this country for nearly a century. Though tempted to repeat the speech, he spoke to a couple of points. First, English or chemistry professors, and others, are actually part of a national faculty—they basically teach the same things, follow the same pattern of education across the country. The disciplines don't necessarily encourage thinking and acting outside a narrow set of norms. He repeated his call for three or four departments across campus to agree to be experimenters in looking at other ways to deal with assessing and accepting transfer students.

His second request was to Provost Belcher and Vice-Chancellor Donaldson. Good people have been looking at retention and what we should be doing about it. There was a strategic planning committee leading up to UALR Fast Forward that had a number of good recommendations. We've had some good thinking and analysis done in several departments. It's time to stop thinking and assessing, and analyzing; it's time now to act. He asked that Drs. Belcher and Donaldson lead an effort to implement a plan: select a limited number of actions or strategies that we will undertake to address retention. By the end of the fall semester, we should be taking action steps to put us in an improved position for meeting new funding formula guidelines.

We must, the chancellor said, have faculty ownership of and faculty involvement in recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. We're committed to changing as needed to find those different practices that we should undertake.

We are already a very fine institution, serving Arkansas and the community in important ways, and he is convinced we will only get better. Our task is making it happen sooner rather than later. It is hard and rewarding work. He is asking the people of the university to do our important work a notch or two better than we did it last year. He is asking each of us to recognize that we have a stake in and a responsibility to address big institutional challenges, and that we be very slow to say, "That's somebody else's problem." The chancellor said he is looking forward to another year of building a great university together.

VI. Open forum

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Judith Faust
*Secretary, Faculty Senat
and University Assembly*