

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK
University Assembly Meeting

*Tuesday, August 17, 2010 • 2:00 p.m.
Dickinson Hall Auditorium*

MINUTES

I. Call to order

President Andrew Eshleman declared it to be 2 p.m., called the meeting to order, and welcomed those in attendance. He began by thanking Richard Ford, his predecessor as president of the University Assembly.

II. Review of minutes

The president postponed review and approval of the minutes of the April, 2009, meeting of the University Assembly, since because of oversights by both he and the secretary, they were not distributed timely. Since no action was taken by the Assembly at its spring meeting, the delay is benign. The draft minutes are posted on the [Faculty Senate web site](#).

III. President's comments

President Eshleman reminded people of something not to do on the first day of class. There once was a snide professor who, after going over the course requirements, asked "Are there any idiots with questions? If so, stand up." After a while the first student stood. "Ah, you're an idiot, then?" said the professor. "Well, no, sir," replied the student. "I just hated to see you standing there by yourself."

President Eshleman asked us to consider why it's important that we be here. He gave a brief history lesson about this body of which we are a part, which was drawn from accounts provided by Rosalie Cheatham, Ed Anson, Fred Williams, and Pete Tschumi.

Eshleman reminded us that the University Assembly has as its function to share governance, and has as part of its charge to oversee the educational policy and programs of the University. He named the previous presidents of the Assembly, including Cheatham, Williams, Tschumi, and Ford, all present today. When this campus entered the University of Arkansas system in 1969, he said, we were offered a few seats in the UA assembly. By 1972, thanks to Fred Williams and a couple of colleagues, we had begun the process of creating our own University Assembly. It worked in the beginning as a

committee of the whole. By 1988, it had grown enough that we needed a faculty senate and a staff senate, and committees of the assembly and of the senates. In order to get people out for voting at the time, the provost then—Chancellor Anderson—had to agree to provide beer. He did. It was root beer.

President Eshleman recognized Brad Patterson, president of the Staff Senate, and gave the dates of the next meetings of both Staff and Faculty Senates.

Eshleman also offered “a sort of constitutional highlight”: First, this body retains the authority to review the actions taken in those other contexts. Second, this is an important venue for the sharing of information about where we’ve been and where we’re going. Third, and most importantly, it makes a difference, he said, for us to be face-to-face here in an institution as large as this one. It’s easy for us to lose sight of being part of a larger community, with a larger, shared mission.

He quoted the mission: *The mission of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock is to develop the intellect of students; to discover and disseminate knowledge; to serve and strengthen society by enhancing awareness in scientific, technical, and cultural arenas; and to promote humane sensitivities and understanding of interdependence. Within this broad mission are the responsibilities to use quality instruction to instill in students a lifelong desire to learn; to use knowledge in ways that will contribute to society; and to apply the resources and research skills of the University community to the service of the city, the state, the nation, and the world in ways that will benefit humanity.*

It’s important, he said, for us to be here where we can look each other in the eye, shake each other’s hands, and affirm our commitment to that mission. We have, he reminded the Assembly, both rights and responsibilities that come with being here, and he thanked all present for being here.

IV. *Report from the Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE), Carol Thompson, Juliana Flinn, and Steve Edison.*

Dr. Thompson spoke of the vitality of ATLE, evidenced by the wide and enthusiastic participation of faculty as both teachers and learners in community and by the breadth of activities offered.

Thompson announced that ATLE is bringing Mary Ellen Weimer to the campus again this year, and recounted ATLE’s mission: *The mission of ATLE 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...*

Thompson introduced her co-directors, Steve Edison and Juliana Flinn, acknowledging that “our beloved Dave McAlpine and Michael Klein” have both rotated off.

Flinn talked about the “Shadow and Share” program, book discussions, teaching workshops, and teaching demonstrations. She underscored that the directors function as facilitators, calling on the excellent resources we have on campus and in the outside world. Discussions this year will be in the form of brown-bag lunches on Mondays. The Distinguished Teaching Fellow award is also available: four faculty members earned it last year. The directors are hoping to recruit some faculty willing to open their classrooms for a couple of days, when any of us could come in and observe. They intend to initiate a couple of new awards: one for new teachers, and a professional development certificate for those who may not be able to make as significant commitment as the distinguished teaching fellow program requires. They’re looking to developing a more formal mentoring program. Once each semester, there will be a drawing for a book; for each ATLE event a faculty member attends, the member gets a ticket that goes into the bowl for the drawing.

V. Remarks by Chancellor Joel Anderson

Chancellor Anderson acknowledged the many in attendance, remarking that there were so many people here, he wondered if they know something he didn't. He welcomed all, and especially the people for whom this is their first Assembly meeting.

He began by remarking that we are at a fine cusp in the history of this organization. We stand on the shoulders of others, and in the last seven to ten years, have done a lot to move the institution forward.

Five and a half years ago we launched our first campaign with a goal of \$75 million. We have reached it early, with 76,000 gifts from 16,000 individuals. Half the employees of this organization have contributed a total of \$1.97 million.

What have people been giving money for? ATLE, scholarships—perennially the most popular cause, bricks and mortar, equipment, the arts, endowments for positions, athletics, the campus environment, and services.

We're not stopping, the chancellor announced. This morning, the campaign steering committee, chaired by Haskell Dickinson, formally decided not to declare victory and leave the field, but that we can confidently raise our goal to \$100 million. The chancellor extended great appreciation to Bob Denman and the development staff, who were roundly applauded by the Assembly.

Fundraising is a lot like scientific research: it's just a hard slog. It requires a lot of patiently sustained activity. For example, on September 10, when the UA Board of Trustees has its next meeting, it will be on this campus—and we will have the opening ceremony for the new EIT building. That's been in the works for eleven years.

The Donaghey Foundation has agreed to increase its funding of the Donaghey Scholars program, enabling us to increase the number of scholars from 80 to 100.

Over this period of Fast Forward, we crossed the Carnegie category into being a research university. We now have nine doctoral programs, with a PhD in integrated computing being the most recent addition approved.

We are expanding student housing: A year from now, we will have more than 1000 students housed on campus. We've been playing catch-up, and have good momentum.

The appearance in two NCAA post-season games of our women's basketball team had been a boon, especially since we've done it right, emphasizing academic success. This past year eleven of our fifteen teams won academic honors. Each year, the AD and the chancellor sit down with every coach and go through the roster of each student athlete.

The University District, the chancellor said, needs more time than he has today. We now have in place a community development corporation as we undertake the University District's mission.

We need now to move into a new planning phase, and it's been underway since January. Dr. Belcher has done a good job in leading the process. The focus of this year's Chancellor's Leadership Group retreat, which included a greatly expanded contingent of faculty members, was extending the strategic plan.

State revenues for June and July looked better. Caution is still in order, but it gives him confidence that we're going to get the okay on the raises we had intended to give beginning July 1. When we have the green light, we'll make them retroactive.

Race remains a monumental issue in our nation and in our state. As an engaged university, we must work hard to make a difference. We pledged to be a keeper of the flame on this issue. The Donaghey Foundation gave us a grant to explore the establishment of an ongoing institute to deal with these matters. We held a planning summit including us and outsiders—businesses, nonprofits, foundations, faith

communities, and governments, with leadership from Rodney Slater, who was U.S. Secretary of Transportation under President Clinton. The chancellor said we'll be hearing more about this as the year goes on.

He could have mentioned some of the things that have moved us toward a new identity, such as our branding campaign, "It's Time for UALR." It's been successful. We live in a competitive environment, and that requires us to comply with our new communication standards. We'll be having a push to make sure everyone knows about them.

The chancellor observed there are two things going on that he wants us to finally push the reset button on.

One is the Institutional Review Board. Thanks to George Jensen, we're well on our way. The document that you'll be seeing soon will be considerably shorter and more student-friendly. We'll have a university wide IRB, and college level boards to handle more "local" matters.

The other is disability resources. Our record on these issues is excellent, and we've been recognized and applauded nationally. He's proud of our work here. The last couple of years, we've hit some turbulence as the concept of universal design has come up. He has asked Vice Chancellor Donaldson to lead an effort to clarify this by bringing in a nationally recognized expert to help us reopen dialogue on the campus.

All of this is good stuff, the chancellor said, but there's still one issue that is most important: student success. Our student retention and graduation rates are abysmal. Of first-time full-time entering freshmen in 2003, fewer than 17% had graduated by 2009. This factor is costing us money, and it is a significant concern to many outside our walls: donors, foundations, public officials. All of us have a role to play in meeting this challenge. The challenge isn't new, but we haven't faced it. The chancellor is asking, indeed insisting, that everyone get to work to change it. Beginning with the provost...

VI. Remarks by Provost David Belcher

The provost, beginning his discussion of improving the graduation rate, remembered how the chancellor had reveled in moving across the hall.

The provost analyzed the university's performance in degree completion, taking into account a number of factors that have contributed to it. We can make excuses, he said, but when we compare our rate to those of all the universities in the state, our performance is worst. When we compare with the institutions we identified as our peer metropolitan universities, we're the worst.

Why should we care, the provost asked? Because it's embarrassing, he said. Because, he said, there's a clear economic advantage to individual people in graduating without undue delays. In 2002, our graduation rate was 19.7; in 2008, it fell to 18.8%, and in 2009, 16.9%. During that same time, per capita income sank as well.

Another pragmatic reason to care: The state funding formula us progressively shifting away from being entirely based on enrollment (SSCH) and toward success rates, such as course completion and graduation..

Under Governor Beebe's leadership, the state is poised to join the national Complete College Initiative. The goal is to double the number of college graduates in Arkansas in ten years. We're at less than half the rate of Massachusetts, for example. What does this doubling mean for us? The goals aren't yet set in stone, but all indications are that we will be expected to increase by 6% a year the number of graduates. That will get us to pretty close to doubling our grads in ten years.

This may bode well for us, the provost said, because it's a different standard than the six-year graduation rate, which is so very difficult for us. But we *can* increase the number of people who graduate from UALR.

If you believe UALR is about meeting community, state, and national needs, then you'll do everything you can, the provost said.

Finally a focus on getting students to degrees is grounded in our deepest values as educators. Research and public service are deeply important to us, and done well, they will be tightly entwined with teaching and with the rate of success of our students.

What will we do? What are we to do? Others certainly have roles to play: students themselves for taking responsibility for their own educations, and the schools that send us our students for preparing them for higher education—though it's worth noting we do train those school teachers and administrators.

Still, it's ours to deal with. The provost told the Assembly what we will *not* do: we will not dumb down the curriculum. We will not reduce standards or expectations. Quality stands.

We've increased admission standards twice in three years, and our average ACT score has gone from 19 to 22 in three years. Housing helps; we'll have a lot more students creating their own learning communities on campus. Pulling our student services together helps. There are a number of programs targeted to individuals—wanted to mention one: the African-American Male Initiative program.

We have mandatory student orientation.

We ensure that all students who need remediation can get into developmental courses. The retention rates of Academic Success students were better than the fall than the spring retention rate for regular students.

Midterm grades are now a requirement.

We have three strategies for student success that have not yet been fully implemented. One is first-year experience courses across the campus. The Senate approved it in principle, but it hasn't been thoroughly initiated. We cannot wait until the new core curriculum is in place. We know it works to increase retention rates. We can't wait because too many students will be lost in the interim.

Another is early declaration of majors.

And the third is strengthening student advising. We've made some important progress here, but there's more to be done.

These three initiatives stand.

The provost said we will initiate a process similar to the one the chancellor described with him, the AD and the coaches, to take place in every college and every department.

In the next few years, we've got nearly a third of our faculty retiring. We need to hire their successors wisely. We must hire toward our vision of what we're becoming. That will be the pivotal point in decisions related to hiring, promotion, and tenure.

We will undertake significant structural changes in the university that make it clear student success is our overarching priority. The final report of a task force will be released in the next few weeks.

SREB recently released a report highlighting student success initiatives, and it's a good read. Changing our performance is going to take leadership in departments, in colleges, and by staff; it's going to take budgetary and financial leadership. Student services and academic affairs must break some traditional boundaries.

The provost also highlighted the principle of intense focus on the individual student.

The provost closed with slides of four of his teachers and told us how they transformed him, how they made things possible for him, like the one who told him in the middle of a piano lesson that he'd make a great department chair. The provost said he knows we can identify those teachers in our own lives. "Who will do for our students

what these people did for us? For the sake of our students, our city, our state, and our nation, this is our responsibility.”

VII. Open forum

President Eshleman called for matters members wished to bring before the Assembly for discussion. None were brought forward.

VIII, Adjournment

There being no further discussion and no further business to come before the Assembly, the president adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Faust, Secretary