

I attended the May 20, 2010 meeting of the University of Illinois Trustees in Chicago as the UIS faculty observer. I also attended the meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the BOT the day before.

The Academic and Student Affairs committee is chaired by Trustee Hassara and includes as members Trustees Tortolero, Carroll, Kortiz, and the student Trustees from each campus. The meeting of the committee was called to order at 3 pm. The minutes from the last meeting were approved unanimously. Vice President for Academic Affairs Meena Rao told the committee about a new web site for academic affairs: www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/. This web site includes a one-stop for finding resources associated with academic affairs for the three campuses.

VP Rao then began a presentation on the promotion and tenure process for faculty. She handed off the presentation to Dr Kathryn Eisenhart (UIS) to give an overview of the tenure and promotion process and its importance to the University. That was followed by presentations by:

- Dr Mitra Dutta (UIC, Computer Science) on the role of the department head in promotion and tenure.
- Dean Robert Graves (UIUC, College of Fine Arts) on the role of the dean in promotion and tenure.
- Dr Yolanda Majors (UIC, Curriculum and Instruction) gave the perspective of a recently tenured faculty member.

The Trustees were very eager to learn. They interrupted the presentations frequently with questions. Most of the questions were very basic. President Ikenberry focused them by commenting that the best roll of the BOT is to become comfortable and knowledgeable enough with the promotion and tenure process to trust its results and recommendations.

The discussion about promotion and tenure took up almost the entire meeting time. A presentation and discussion about graduate education was postponed to a later meeting (probably this fall).

Vice Chancellor Barnett (UIS) gave a brief presentation on the proposed UIS Pilot Program for a Contiguous Tuition Zone. The proposal is to offer in-state tuition rates (at the UIS campus only) to students from counties in Iowa and Missouri that border Illinois. The affected area includes most of the metropolitan areas of St Louis and the Quad Cities. Dr Barnett's presentation very succinctly outlined how this program will attract students from those geographic areas to UIS and help UIS remain competitive with other state schools that offer similar deals to students in the five states contiguous to Illinois. At the conclusion of the presentation the committee had no questions.

The next morning the Board of Trustees meeting was called to order at 8:08 am. All of the trustees were present except Governor Quinn. They moved into executive session for the next 90 minutes in order to discuss “personnel matters.”

The meeting resumed at 9:50 am with very brief welcoming remarks from Chairman Kennedy and introductions of the administrative staff and faculty observers by President Ikenberry. At this point the agenda for the meeting became only a rough suggestion. A number of the agenda items were taken out of order and abbreviated for the sake of time.

President Ikenberry introduced Professor Roy Campbell (UIUC, Computer Science) who had been selected by the University Senate’s Conference to deliver a short presentation on recruitment and retention of faculty. Dr Campbell’s presentation was eloquent and highlighted issues that attract and retain quality faculty at the University of Illinois, including but not exclusive to salary and compensation.

President Ikenberry used Dr Campbell’s remarks to segue into his own remarks. He offered that he feels there are two keys to ensure the survival of public universities: increasing revenues and reform within. He commented that the University needs to take a more comprehensive approach to revenue generation that includes tuition, state appropriation, and alumni giving. He said that “reform within” is a tougher challenge but that increasing administrative efficiency will potentially stretch our resources further. He tied this into Dr Campbell’s comments that good staff support and resources play a role in attracting and retaining quality faculty.

President Ikenberry continued his comments by addressing the tuition item on the meeting’s agenda. His aim was to make a case for a responsible increase that is consistent with the mission and promise of the University of Illinois. He expressed empathy for students who are “caught in the middle” between falling state support and tuition increases. He acknowledged university faculty and staff had forestalled a budget catastrophe to this point through furloughs and other measures. He emphasized that because of guaranteed tuition that the proposed increase was on incoming freshmen. The 9.5% increase is 3.7% annualized over four years. He stated that would barely keep up with indexed inflation. He announced that the increase in tuition rates would be accompanied by an increase in student financial aid. He pointed out that roughly 15% on every tuition dollar goes toward need-based financial aid and that there would be a roughly \$50 million offered in aid next year.

President Ikenberry ended his comments by enumerating what he believes are the challenges facing the University next year. Those are:

1. Simplification of the tuition rate structure.
2. A more efficient system for packaging financial aid.
3. Linking admissions and financial aid so that students know the aid they will receive when they are admitted.

At 10:30 am the Board heard a report from the Audit, Finance, and Facilities Committee chaired by Trustee McMillan. The first order of business from that committee was a preliminary report from the Administrative Review and Restructuring task force (ARR, sometimes referred to via a bad pun as the “pirate” task force) given jointly by Dr Craig Bizzani and Vice President Gosh. (<http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/May%202020,%202010/present-1-Admin%20Review-Restructuring%20.pdf>) The report give was preliminary. The full report is not due until June 15. The presentation was mostly about context and guiding principles. However they shared some “specific suggestions” on page 10 of the presentation.

Outside the meeting there had been much discussion about the second “specific suggestion” concerning consolidating the Academic and Techonology VP positions. Item number 03.a on the Regular Agenda was added just before the meeting to start the implementation of this point. Alert faculty had informed President Ikenberry that implementing this suggestion requires a change of the General Rules. This made agenda item 03.a merely advisory. In discussions with the President, the University Senates Conference had expressed a wish that the VP for Technology and Economic Development would be rolled into the portfolio of the VP of Academic Affairs. The distinction being that Academic Affairs is an important priority of the University and the proposed “merge” is not a true merging of equals as implied by the preliminary ARR report. It is also unclear to what extent VP Rao (Academic Affairs) has been consulted on this suggestion.

In conclusion the preliminary ARR report suggested the following BOT action on page 18. Dr Bizzani added that at this point “speed should trump perfect” to realize immediate returns and suggested a six month and then 12 month review to follow-up the report. At the conclusion of the report Chairman Kennedy thanked the committee and emphasized that the amount of consolidation that actually occurs needs to serve the mission of the University as well as occur with the cooperation of other governing bodies. Trustee Montgomery voiced concern about “loss of diversity” that could be caused consolidating and cutting administration.

Trustee Hassarah asked about the impact of pension reform. VP Gosh replied that pension reform is a major issue because it caps benefits at a lower salary than previously allowed. President Ikenberry offered that another internal study on the impact of pension reform is forthcoming. Trustee Hassarah expressed concern about how furloughs have impacted pensions. President Ikenberry replied that the furlough program exempted soon to retire staff and faculty for this reason. VP Knor also offered that the University is investigating supplemental pension options.

Trustee Oliver asked if the full report in June will include numerical projections of the expected savings that would result from implementing each of the reports final suggestions. VP Gosh said there would be no specific numbers on project savings but that the report would include examples of successful implementation of their suggestions.

Trustee Montgomery asked if the report takes into account that the university educates C students as well as very good students. (I am not really sure what he was driving at.) VP Gosh replied that the ARR is guided by the principle of maintaining quality while realizing savings without academic impact. President Ikenberry explained that the ARR is focusing on central administration and that comparable planning concerning academics is occurring at the campus and college level.

Next VP Knor made presentation on the financial state of the university (<http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/May%202020,%202010/present-2-%20Financial%20Indicators.pdf>). See that report for many useful numbers and figures concerning the financial state of the university. The situation is still dire. Extrapolating the current trend to next year paints a bleak picture where we cannot rely on the state to pay any of the funds it has appropriated in a timely fashion.

Next VP Knor made presentation the proposed tuition rates for next year (<http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/May%202020,%202010/present-3-%20Tuition.pdf>).

Remembering Dr Campbell's remarks about recruiting and retaining quality faculty, the trustees took particular interest in page 4 of that presentation which shows the relative level of faculty salaries for each of the campus compared to their "peers." The peers for UIUC (and their rankings on that chart) include Columbia (#1), University of Chicago (#2), Northwestern (#8), University of Michigan (#17), and University of Wisconsin Madison (#21). The "peers" of UIC (and their rank on the chart) include: University of Maryland (#1) and Virginia Tech (#12). The "peers" of UIS include Union (#1).

Page 6 of the tuition presentation includes graphs that show what percentages of students are paying full tuition. At UIS roughly the same number of students who pay full tuition (32%) pay no tuition (32%). The remaining 36% pay some reduced tuition rate. The chart on page 7 shows that UIS students saw a larger fee increase this year than students on either of the other two campuses.

After VP Knor's presentations Trustee Hassarah asked about the impact of the state's action to increase the "lapse" spending period it had to pay off money owed in appropriations. This period had been two months but has been extended to five months. VP Knor replied that this was a concern because it makes it less certain when we will receive our appropriation.

Trustee Kroritz asked for a best guess of when the state will pay what they owe from 2010. VP Knor replied that it will probably be later than July.

Trustee Koritz asked if faculty salaries are indexed in terms of cost of living in the plot in the tuition report. VP Knor replied, no. Kortiz pointed out that may be a factor in why Urbana and Springfield rank low in faculty salaries. VP Rao pointed

out that on those charts Northwestern and Chicago are not considered “peers” of UIC yet they poach UIC faculty at will because they offer more competitive compensation packages. She stated that UIC has attracted several promising faculty to the area only to have them stolen away by Northwestern and Chicago.

Trustee Stroble asked if the expense of textbooks is included in financial aid to students? VP Knor informed her that they are and used Pell Grants as an example. President Ikenberry commented that the BOT should revisit student aid at a later meeting.

Chairman Kennedy asked what rate of tuition increase is needed to keep up with the consumer price index. VP Knor replied that the proposed 9.5% barely keeps up with inflation. Chairman Kennedy stated that then this has to be the standard increase just to stay even.

Chancellor Ringeisen raised the issue of veterans’ tuition grants. Under state law, tuition is waived for veterans. But the state does not reimburse universities for this expense. At UIS this year this cost the campus about \$1 million. Chairman Kennedy said that serving veterans is part of the University’s mission but that the state needs to be “enlightened” about the cost of this commitment.

The Trustees took a working lunch in executive session to discuss “litigation matters” from noon to 1:45 pm. When the meeting resumed Chancellor Allen-Mears (UIC) delivered a belated welcome to the UIC campus.

At 2 pm there was a report from the Hospital Committee chaired by Trustee Kortiz. The report showed that the hospital has become self-sufficient and it moving up in various rankings.

At 2:25 pm the Board opened up for public comment. The speakers were:

- Dennis O’neil - His purpose was unclear and he sounded a bit disturbed. He started to ramble and ignore the chair’s indications that he was done. Trustee Strobel started a round of applause and he left the podium.
- Lubia Nunez - A UIC student that spoke in favor of sustainability, particularly conservation and recycling programs, at UIC.
- James Peters - President of Landmarks Illinois spoke in favor of the preservation of Mumford House on the Urbana campus.
- Almas Murio – A UIC student who spoke in favor of access for low-income urban students to the UIC campus. She spoke in favor of the LARES program for actively recruiting and cultivating Latino students from poor urban school districts. Trustee Tortolero voiced strong support for her message.
- Ben Rothschild – Urbana student shouted about high salaries for administrators (specifically calling out Joe White, Chancellor Ringeisen, Trustee Strobel, and President Hogan). He also opposed the raising of tuition rates.

- Professor Steve Tozer - UIC professor spoke in support of U of I programs to engage and support public K-12 education.

Outside the meeting I noticed a daylong picket/protest by members of the SEIU. Their purpose or grievance was not clear.

At 3:02 pm the Board received a report from the Academic and Student Affairs Committee chaired by Trustee Hassara. She recapped the committee meeting that I outlined at the start of this report.

Next the Board recognized the outgoing student trustees for their work and involvement. Trustee Felix (UIS) stood out as well spoken when he got his opportunity to thank the Board.

At 3:15 pm VP Rao made a presentation on diversity focusing on Graduate and Professional programs (<http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/May%202020,%202010/present-6-%20Diversity-UrbanHealth.pdf>). UIS compares well with our peers in terms of diversity of graduate students. The presentation also included a segment on the Urban Health Program at UIC that attracts and educates minority students in the health sciences. That program has a very impressive 30-year record.

At 3:48 pm the Board moved to consider the Voice Vote Agenda. Item A2a praising President Ikenberry for his service was read aloud and received with a standing ovation. President Ikenberry responded very graciously to this praise. All members of the Board voted “aye” on all items except:

- Trustee Koritz abstained from voting on the tuition increase (14a) because he has children enrolled at the Urbana campus so he has potential conflict of interest.
- The student Trustees voted “no” on the tuition increase (14a).

There was audible disappointment among the faculty present when the students announced their “no” vote on the tuition increase. Personally I agreed with that sentiment. Their vote was disappointing because it lacked political will, courage, or a sound expressed reason. It appeared to be a knee jerk reaction because they had not actively participated in the discussion before casting their vote. Several well-constructed arguments had been made in favor of this increase. Rather than present an argument against the increase as part of deliberations, the students merely voted “no.”

At 4:00 pm the Board began consideration of the Roll Call Agenda. This agenda became a bigger deal than normal over the issue of preferential awarding of contracts to minority owned contractors.

Trustee Carroll (as is her usual practice) asked if items 24 (construction on dorms at Urbana) and 25 (extending contracts for Job Ordering Contract System, UIC)

included any minority contractors. AVP Bess informed her that no minority run firms were awarded a contract on item 24. It was a blind low-bid-wins process as required by state law, leaving the university no room to consider the minority status of company ownership. Bess continued that the prime contractors are required to have at least 6% minority participation when the sub-contracts are bid.

Chairman Kennedy asked what the consequence would be of delaying approval of item 24. AVP Bess replied that it would be detrimental to the on-time status. Further probing led to the estimate that because this would delay the decision past summer construction season that it could delay the project a year or more.

Trustees Carroll, Tortelero, and Montgomery all voiced a lack of patience with the current contracting process. They voiced doubts that the Board would ever really commit to implementing a policy that helped ensure more minority owned businesses won contracts from the University. This is a tricky issue because AVP Bess is doing exactly what state law requires of him. The Board could make a policy that challenges state law but there are potential consequences with that action. Another approach would be for the Board to seek a change in state law from the Legislature.

It was revealed in discussion that item 25, which was a renewal of ongoing contracts, includes three Latino owned and one woman owned contractors. One African-American owned contractor had withdrawn themselves from that agreement. Trustees Montgomery and Carroll focused mainly on the lack of African-American own contractors participating in the process.

After much discussion, President Ikenberry withdrew item #24. AVP Bess communicated that delaying item #25 would be very disruptive to University operations since it is a continuation of existing contracts.

At 4:25 pm, all the members of the Board voted in favor of all the regular agenda items (with #24 being withdrawn). I had to catch a 5:15 pm train so I left the meeting at that point. A fellow observer relayed to me that the Board adjourned soon after I left.

Respectfully submitted,
John C. Martin