

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON BENEFITS AND RETIREMENT
SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

36 Gerberding

Chair Steven Demorest called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Vote to extend voting rights to non-faculty representatives
2. Approval of minutes of the November 24, 2008 meeting – see draft
3. Welcome new members

Old Business

4. Report from Randy Hodgins (VP External Affairs) - 15-20 minute report followed by Q&A
5. Report from JW Harrington (Faculty Legislative Representative) - 15-20 minute report followed by Q&A

New Business

6. Wrap up and identify agenda items for February Meeting

1. Vote to extend voting rights to non-faculty representatives

Chair Demorest announced that due to lack of attendance for December's meeting, the council was unable to vote in regards to granting voting rights to non-faculty representatives on the council. A motion was made and members unanimously approved to grant voting rights to J. Ray Bowen, Charles Chamberlin, and Karen Russell.

2. Approval of minutes of the November 24, 2008 meeting

One change was made to the meeting minutes from the November 24, 2008. A motion to approve the minutes as amended was passed with three abstentions.

3. Welcome new members

Introductions were made around the table with each council member identifying what area in the UW they work in and how long they have been serving on the Council.

Old Business

4. Report from Randy Hodgins (VP of External Affairs)

Randy Hodgins, VP of External Affairs and Director of State Relations for the UW, began with a discussion of the budget and economic issues relevant to compensation and benefits coming from Olympia. Hodgins stated that there is every reason to expect the March revenue forecast to be down perhaps another billion dollars. He identified a poor retail holiday season due, in part, to the weather in the Seattle area as well as the impact of the Boeing machinists strike; neither of which were accounted for in the most recent

budget forecast. He does not believe that the real numbers will be known for a while and he stated that getting out of this legislative session without some sort of large budget cut will be next to impossible because of the way state laws are set up. He noted the results of Initiative 960, which require any tax increases to be approved by a two-thirds majority, as having a big impact on what the structure of the budget cut will look like. He believes the legislation will make use of fee increases, specifically tuition, to account for many of the budgetary items.

In regards to compensation, Hodgins noted that several of the union groups representing classified employees have filed a lawsuit in hopes of retaining the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). In light of the magnitude of the current budget crisis, he does not believe the legislature will be able to grant the COLA to any state employees. He noted that there may be a state-incentive plan for early retirement. There are significant upfront costs, but may make more sense in the long run with regards to workforce reduction. Hodgins also believes that since the COLA will probably not be a viable part of the compensation package, there may be more attention paid to benefits side.

5. Report from JW Harrington, UW Faculty Legislative Representative

JW Harrington, the UW Faculty Legislative Representative, began his update by discussing the Faculty position regarding the state budget cuts. A key goal of the (Faculty) Senate Committee on Planning and Budget is to protect the core of the UW programs and colleges when making cuts. A key legislative goal is to discourage any new targeted operating budget items for the University, arguing that it is most important to minimize the cuts to the core education budget.

The Faculty would like to see compensation increases for faculty, librarians, and professional staff that are comparable to increases for staff working under labor contracts. However, the Governor's budget proposal does not include funds for negotiated pay raises, and there's every chance that the Legislature will not identify funds for pay raises. If a university finds money for pay raises from its local funds (not specifically allocated by the state for pay increases), the value of those locally funded raises is deducted from the salary base when the state next allocates a percentage pay increase.

The Faculty supports the University's request for capital projects. Harrington pointed out that Husky Stadium renovation is not part of the University's capital budget request. Rather, the University would like the Legislature to authorize King County to determine what will happen to King County hotel and rental-car taxes after existing bonds are paid off. The Faculty will not get involved in that legislative initiative.

The Faculty strongly support the request by all state universities to be able to set tuition levels except for resident undergraduate tuition. This authority was granted to all universities for a six-year period that ended in Autumn 2008. There is not currently a proposal to give universities the authority to set resident undergraduate tuition levels without Legislature-defined caps.

To increase access to baccalaureate education, the Legislature is considering many options including baccalaureate programs at community colleges, and greater use of courses delivered entirely through internet.

Harrington asked the FCBR to let him (and Deputy Faculty Legislative Representative Jim Fridley) know if there were any legislative initiatives to be pursued in this or a subsequent session. He also sought suggestions of ways for him to get rapid feedback from faculty regarding legislative developments while the Legislature is in session. Council members provided their personal email addresses to Mr. Harrington so that any action necessary would be handled in accordance with the Use of State Resources Policy.

Katy Dwyer offered to flag the bills that need immediate response and would be willing to put Harrington on her distribution list to receive the updates. She added that she would be happy to share her updates and encouraged JW to contact her directly for any response he needed from an administration perspective.

The council participated in a short discussion about the Evergreen State College and its furlough policy. Some members found it interesting, but it was quickly dismissed and identified as being unworkable at the UW given the size and variety of employees and faculty.

Patti Brandt inquired about learning and access in small groups versus mass learning. She wanted to know if any research has been represented. Harrington noted that with regards to the budget he has one concrete response. He stated that the governor's budget language is clear as to what the UW is to be held to in terms of number of degrees granted and student access. The language states that the budget may be cut, but the UW will still need to perform at a certain level. Brandt asked if there was a way to get this type of information to the departments because she feels that the information and urgency is not always sensed at her level.

Chair Demorest identified the Faculty Council on Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Council for Instructional Quality as the faculty councils who deal directly with disseminating information. Mindy Kornberg noted that President Emmert has met with the Board of Deans and has gone to Olympia several times to show them the consequences of the cuts at different levels. She noted that it is important to show the legislation what the cuts really look like.

6. Wrap up and identify agenda items for February meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting Chair Demorest asked council members to identify items they would like to see on February's agenda. Through some discussion, the following topics were chosen:

- Future for "opt-out for over 50."
- Fund review committee – update
- Mock-up Newsletter – Dwyer will check to see if it is ready for distribution

- Legislative update – Dwyer

On a closing note, Chamberlin asked Dwyer if there was anything this Council could do in support of additional resources for the WorkLife and Benefits Office. He asked if there was any way to add, even temporarily, to her staff over the next nine months in anticipation of the increased workload expected with regards to workforce reduction. Dwyer said she would put together some numbers and work on the language to put in front of the council at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes by Kelly Baker, Council Support Specialist kcbaker@u.washington.edu

Present:	Faculty:	R. Bowen, Brandt, Brock, Breidenthal, Demorest
	Ex-Officio Reps:	Chamberlin, J.R. Bowen,
	President’s Designee:	Kornberg
	Special Guests:	Harrington, Hodgins
	Regularly Invited Guests:	Dougherty, Dwyer
Absent:	Ex-Officio Reps:	Pew, Doherty-Renz, Russell