November 8, 2010

Professor Jacqueline Wright
Secretary for Academic Governance
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College of Nursing
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48825

Dear Professor Wright:

Please accept this letter as our report on the 2010 CIC Faculty Leadership Conference.

The conference was held on October 22-23, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Attendees included Mark Sandler of the CIC as well as 26 faculty representatives from the University of Illinois, Chicago (1), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (2), Indiana (3), Iowa (1), Michigan (2), Minnesota (2), MSU (John Powell, Chair ECAC and Rob Maleczka, Vice-Chair ECAC), OSU (2), Penn State (2), Purdue (2), and Wisconsin (7). Topics discussed included the changing regulatory climate, diversity challenges across higher education, new funding models, and distance education. An overarching theme was the role that academic governance can or should play with regards to these issues.

**Compliance** — The cost of compliance, both to University budgets and faculty productivity, dominated the first set of conversations. UW Provost Paul DeLuca gave an historical perspective of the Federal regulatory environment, which was followed by a presentation and discussion, led by Professor Irwin Goldman, on the impact of compliance on faculty productivity. The burden of compliance with Federal and State regulations is already heavy and may fast be approaching a breaking point. Despite the escalation of regulatory requirements, Federal agencies maintain a cap on the associated administrative portion of allowable indirect costs. As a consequence, there are often gaps between the negotiated indirect cost rate and the real indirect cost rate (e.g. 50% vs. 63% at UW Madison). Such differences are often made up by general fund dollars, which themselves are limited.

On the faculty side, recent studies suggest that 42% of faculty time is spent on post-award administration. That number is up from 20% in 1990. Furthermore, the quality of much of the data being requested and collected is questionable. In addition to governmental and funding agency compliance, faculty are increasingly (or at least seemingly) burdened by University regulations.

A number of new approaches to managing such regulatory issues were discussed. These ranged from better risk/benefit analyses to adding surcharges to grants that carry extraordinary regulatory requirements (e.g. human subjects, vertebrate animals, etc.) to increased scrutiny of proposed regulations by academic governance.

**Question for us:** As MSU seeks to expand its NIH funding, how are we planning to cover the increased cost of compliance?

**Diversity** — A presentation on the landscape of diversity challenges across higher education was made by Professor Jerlando Jackson. The inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups at all levels of the academy (from undergraduate and graduate enrollments to faculty to upper administrations) were presented and discussed. While gains have been made, they are uneven and in some case minimal (e.g. African-Americans in STEM disciplines).

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Some of the data presented were viewed with surprise. For example, for-profit universities would appear to be more successful at recruiting persons of color than public universities and that retention of students of color is similar for the for-profits, majority universities, and HBCU’s. Discussions on the role that academic governance, and faculty in general, can play in diversity efforts were broad in scope. Suggestions included, increased faculty involvement in undergraduate admissions and establishing clearer lines of communication between academic governance bodies and on-campus offices of inclusion and diversity.

**Funding Models for Research Universities** — Michael Knetter, President of the UW foundation, put forth the premise that, unlike in the research arena, there is no real incentive for universities to provide extraordinary education nor are there incentives for value creation in the classroom. For purposes of discussion, and using UW athletics as a model, he asked us to consider a funding system where States gave money directly to students as opposed to institutions. He also asked why, for all of their research acumen, universities have not expanded globally. Although the role of academic governance in developing new funding models was unclear, thoughtful discussions ensued on the topics presented and on how to make the case for State taxes supporting an enterprise that is increasing global in nature.

**Distance learning** — Marv Van Kekerix, Interim Chancellor, UW Colleges/UW Extension offered many data and opinions on distance (on-line) education in US higher education. On-line enrollments are increasing at a rate greater than that of overall enrollments, with ~25% of students reporting that they took at least one online course. While undergraduates comprise the bulk on on-line students (82%), the on-line share of enrollment is greatest at the graduate level (13% doctoral and 24% masters vs. 8% baccalaureate). Business and education courses account for the bulk of on-line graduate instruction. A significant number (~67%) of chief academic officers at Ph.D. and Associate Degree granting institutions consider on-line instruction to be critical to their institution’s long-term strategy. In contrast, only 33% of PUI chief academic officers share that view. Furthermore, when asked to compare the quality of on-line vs. face-to-face learning, chief academic officers tend to view on-line course more favorably than faculty. Roughly 52% of the faculty who have taught on-line courses believe on-line course to be the same (38%) or better (14%) than face-to-face classes as compared to 68% of chief academic officers. Furthermore, a majority of the faculty who have taught on-line courses found them harder to prepare and teach than traditional courses. Nonetheless, on-line courses are often the only way to reach students.

These and the other data presented prompted a number of questions, including those for academic governance. For example, are the introductions of on-line courses reviewed by University Curriculum Committees? What compliance issues (e.g. ADA compliance) accompany on-line course? How do student assemblies and governance organizations represent distance learners?

Lastly, Mark Sandler of the CIC gave an update on open access publishing and some issues being addressed by CIC member Provosts.

Please feel free to post this letter to the academic governance web site. If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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