

Provost Gaber and Chancellor Gearhart's response to Faculty Senate Chair Di Brezzo's December 2010 "Report on faculty comments and issues" (January 19, 2011)

I. Background

In November 2010, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee hosted open faculty forums to gather input and identify issues. Approximately 175 faculty members participated in one or both sessions. Additionally, another 75-100 emails were sent to the Faculty Senate Chair with feedback. Faculty Senate Chair Di Brezzo collated the qualitative data and presented the findings to the Chancellor's Administrative Policy Council on December 6, 2010. The presentation focused on seven main areas: money; space; communications; retention; growth; odds & ends; and, generating alternatives. Faculty Senate identified comments/ issues are noted in *italics*.

II. Role of Faculty Senate Chair Di Brezzo

- *Representing the "voice of the faculty"*
- *Major initiatives:*
 - *Academic Integrity*
 - *Course Evaluations*

III. Money

- *Salaries*
- *Dr. Gearhart's initiative*
- *Merit Pay*
- *Stipends GA/TA*
Not competitive- hurts recruiting
- *Start up packages*
- *Travel Money*
- *Financial needs of students*
- *Single Parents*

Response:

Salaries

We are very aware that we need to continue to make progress toward improving salaries for faculty and staff.

Last year, we began to work on Full Professor salaries—because they were the most out of line with our peers—by increasing the promotional increment for Full Professors to \$6500 and by providing all existing Full Professors a \$500 equity adjustment. This year, the increment increases to \$7000 and Full Professors will get another \$500 equity adjustment.

GA/TA Stipends

We are hoping to be able to make progress on this in the coming years.

Start-up packages and indirect return

The new Vice Provost for Research and Economic Development has implemented a new start-up package policy. The policy can be found in the Academic Policy Series-- #1405.16F. Most departments have found the packages to be competitive. Enhanced review of start-up packages and a reasonable approach to budgeting those packages will afford a more realistic approach to funding both start-up packages and grant matching commitments.

Colleges and schools receive a return of indirect costs recovered by the research funding generated. Each unit allocates those funds (often for travel and equipment) based on their availability and on the basis of policies determined by the deans and the chairs within the unit.

Financial needs of students

We continue to work to meet the financial needs of our students. The Academic Challenge Scholarship (lottery scholarship) has helped to meet some of the need. At the same time, the university has increased the amount of scholarship funding that is available.

Additionally, Financial Aid has set January 25 and February 23, 2011, for its first financial planning seminars to be held in the Union. These seminars will be announced in Newswire and faculty are encouraged to let students know about these seminars.

IV. Space

- *Classrooms*
- *Labs*
- *Supplies*
- *Equipment*
- *Offices/ Conference Rooms*
- *Educational access*

Response:

We continue to ask Deans/ Associate Deans/ Department Chairs to help us identify space needs. We are providing additional resources for supplies/ equipment and space renovation.

In December 2010 we held a meeting with facilities management and representatives from Fulbright College to determine space needs. The conversations need to be on-going. The implementation of centralized classroom scheduling will help in the short term, but a new classroom/ lab facility will be needed if we continue to grow.

We continue to work with the Center for Educational Access to determine how to meet their needs.

V. Communications

- *Evaluation of faculty*
- *Evaluation of Chairs/Heads*
- *How decisions are passed along from Deans to faculty*
- *Open/Closed doors*
- *Part of the solution vs. problem*
- *Not part of the discussion*

Response:

Communication is integral to the success of the university. We will continue to engage faculty and ask that other administrators do as well. Evaluations of faculty and chairs/heads will continue to be improved in the coming years. The Chancellor and Provost meet monthly with the Faculty Senate Chair and Campus Council Chair to facilitate additional communication.

VI. Retention

- *Faculty feel as though they know students yet the perception is we added 'adjunct' help not more faculty.*
- *Students don't know they don't know how to study*
- *Exposure to professors in major area sooner in their career*
- *FYE/ Intro to discipline*

Response:

We are strongly committed to increasing retention rates and graduation rates. One key element in this has been the addition of new tenure-track faculty – 17 this year and 15 next year—who will be able to work with students. While we have also increased “adjunct” faculty we are committed to continuing to grow the tenure-track faculty ranks.

VII. Growth

- *Clearly has allowed us to add significant number of faculty for the first time in almost 20 years*
- *For some of the faculty, growth and retention are at odds with each other.*
Eg. Larger classes
- *Attendance*
- *Advising*
- *Honors students*
- *Raise grade point average*
- *Respond to the needs of state*
- *Develop areas of potential impact*
Gerontology
Sustainability
- *Graduate vs. Undergraduate*
- *If there is a 'big picture' faculty don't see it*

Response:

Planned Growth

Student enrollment growth has allowed the university some opportunity to add tenure-track faculty and to provide funds for raises. This is “Planned Growth. The TAP document (http://chancellor.uark.edu/06-04_TAP.pdf), released in Summer 2009, stated as a goal:

Increase overall enrollment while remaining the school of choice for the state's most gifted students; provide a concomitant increase in faculty and staff.

Total planned enrollment is a max of 25,000, with 20,000 undergrads and 5,000 grad students. We will provide temporary funds for additional sections; have asked about needs; will provide resources for adding teaching labs. Starting centralized classroom scheduling for Fall 2011.

Retention

We are also developing an action plan in response to the recommendations of the Graduation Rates Task Force, for increasing graduation rates and retention rates. This plan includes enhanced financial and academic advising and the development of data specific to students at financial and academic risk of not completing.

Honors

Dean Bob McMath was reappointed as Dean of the Honors College in December 2010, after a 5 year review. He was charged with the following:

- Develop a strategy for development and support of university faculty involved in the Honors College and honors programs. This strategy should involve input from a broad base of stakeholders, including the deans of the colleges, which have honors programs.
- Review the size and academic standards associated with admission to, and participation in, the Honors College, with a recommendation, for review by the Executive Committee.
- Develop a communication strategy, which will include reaching out to honors alumni, the campus community and national thought leaders in education.

Sustainability

A new minor in Sustainability is being implemented in Spring 2011; other strategic, "impact areas" should be developed.

VIII. Odds & Ends

- *Increase in paperwork*
Reports decentralized/resources centralized
- *Feeling of doing more with less*
- *Clinical track or tenure track*
- *Faculty vs. Administrative growth*
- *On-line programs*
- *Fear of losing a line if tenure not awarded*
- *Accrediting agencies*

Response:

Paperwork

Many forms are now on-line. Where paperwork can be minimized and/or stream-lined let us know.

Tenure lines

There has been no mandate from university administration to take back tenure lines. If colleges are doing this to reallocate resources there should be the broader conversation with the faculty. Tenure track lines taken from high need departments will be looked at unfavorably. Faculty should not be awarded tenure solely to "retain a position."

On-line programs

The university is continuing to explore how to increase distance education opportunities and how to make this an opportunity for faculty, students and the university.

Growth: Faculty vs. Administrative

We have tried to be very cautious of this and cognizant that we want to increase tenure-track faculty, not administrators. The one position that we consciously converted to two positions was the former Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Research. Because we thought that both of these areas are very important we decided that they should be two positions. The increase was done after consultation with, and at the urging of, some of the most research active faculty on campus.

In looking at the data on faculty and staff, we have found that staff positions grew by 20% between 1999 and 2009, while faculty positions grew by 17% between 1999 and 2010. Increased reporting, technology support, development and student involvement demands have occurred along with increases in enrollment. While some additional staff positions are funded from regular university funds, many are funded through auxiliary revenues and student fee revenues to support computing labs and enhance assistance for technology in the classrooms.

IX. Generating Alternatives

- *Higher Tuition*
- *Attendance policy*
- *Better prepared TA/GAs*
- *Teach a large class help with GA*
- *Post tenure review*
- *Merit Raise to high performers*
- *Incentive grants*
- *Joint ventures with different depart/college*

Response:

We appreciate the alternative recommendations and will explore them in depth. We agree that many of them have great potential.