



FACULTY SENATE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

December 1, 2016 meeting

“The Ghost of an Idea, which shall [hopefully] not put my readers out of humour”

(Overview)

The 2016-2017 Faculty Senate held its eighth regular meeting on December 1, 2016. The meeting began with a brief statement regarding the need to rethink our athletics budget and then moved on to a presentation on the new website by Ms. Jami Hornbuckle, Assistant Vice President for Communications and Marketing. These were followed by the approval of a resolution regarding campus climate and the revised PAc-27. The body also received brief reports from the Faculty Regent and Provost.

“The sound resounded through the [body] like thunder” (Announcements)

- Senator Carlson provided an update on the PAc-26 reconciliation committee. The full committee has met once, and the faculty group convened on Wednesday (Nov. 30th) in order to outline areas of agreement and disagreement with the proposed PAc. The next full meeting (of the entire committee) will be in early January.
- Chair Dobranski introduced the new Faculty Senate Secretary—Ms. Barbara Willoughby.
- In response to reported problems, the Executive Council drafted general guidelines for convening college and university-level standing committees and submitted these guidelines to the Provost. (At issue: faculty-led committees can’t convene without a chair, but they can’t elect a chair if they don’t convene.)

“Men’s courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead,” said Scrooge. “But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change.” (Statement from Senator Adams)

Senator Adams, a faculty member in the Department of English, and President of MSU’s chapter of AAUP, made the following statement on the Senate floor:

When I’ve asked what savings MSU might realize by dropping a division in athletics, I’ve been told that our heavily subsidized Division I program offers “exposure you just can’t buy.” This may well be the

case, but, as Morehead makes national news for the *second time* in 2016, mentioned alongside the possible infractions of a former or current Division I basketball coach, I strongly assert that this exposure is NOT something we can, or should, afford.

As we're working to expand our reach, and tap into markets traditionally served by other institutions of higher ed, we need new, innovative, and positive ways to reach potential students. Maintaining the status quo in athletics is not aiding in this endeavor, not in the least because it reflects a legacy approach that keeps us from being as "nimble" and "flexible" as we need to be in the "new normal" of declining populations and state appropriations.

I have no doubt that I will be accused of drawing attention to isolated incidents and not understanding (or valuing) the importance of athletics overall. I've faced such rejoinders before. I'll say now what I've said in the past—such apparent counterarguments are really just deflections, not substantive responses to my claims. If we proudly point to the singular, and rare, success of MSU students who have gone pro, we need to own the equally rare scandals involving some of our most highly paid coaches. Both sides of the ledger have to be tallied in the final account of "exposure." Even more importantly, we need to have an honest discussion about athletics that acknowledges that there are other options for college athletics than Division I. Questioning the value, or, perhaps more correctly, return on investment, of Division I athletics is NOT the same as questioning the function or importance of athletics in the university experience overall. Nor is it tantamount to a dismissal of athletics outright, as the benefits of sports are not limited to only those athletes participating in the highest NCAA division.

Early last month, Dr. Howard Bunsis, a national AAUP speaker, came to campus and offered a practical solution to the problem of our ballooning athletics budget. This specific solution may or may not be "the" right answer for MSU, but we, as an institution, would greatly benefit from discussing it and entertaining other proposals, because claiming that we maintain our "front porch" (our athletics program) on a "shoe string" doesn't, in and of itself, create the curb appeal that our enrollment figures demonstrate we have yet to fully achieve. We need to be able to show real and meaningful value (to students and to ourselves), and the only way to do that is to have a frank discussion about what we can truly afford in these straitened times.

The discussion that followed began with Senator Prindle asking what we might do to address the issue. Senator Caric urged the body to make a very bold statement in the hopes that such a statement might encourage the administration and BOR, which have been loath to make cuts to athletics at all, to actually do something. Senator Carlson cautioned restraint, arguing that such a bold move might inadvertently confirm the strawman argument members of the admin have been giving to the BOR regarding faculty criticism of athletic spending (namely, that faculty want to reduce the athletics budget by getting rid of athletics in toto—an argument no faculty member has formally made). Members of the body voiced differences of opinion regarding the importance of athletics (Senator Aagaard questioned why we're funneling so much of our limited resources to such a small number of students whilst Senator Riegle, an avowed sports fan, affirmed the necessity of athletic support), but all agreed that the athletics budget should be further scrutinized.

Chair-elect McBrayer put forward a number of suggestions to productively begin this scrutiny, from inviting representative from Athletics to come to Senate to explain the budget to requesting a cost-benefit analysis of moving divisions. Senator Sharp, who is in favor of downgrading divisions, noted that dropping to Division II could actually aid in our recruitment in the region (and attendance of sporting events), as more local kids would be able to play college games.

The Executive Council was charged with exploring the issue and bringing ideas to the Senate floor.

Much More is “as dead as a doornail. Mind! I don’t mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail.” (Presentation from Ms. Jami Hornbuckle, Assistant VP of Communications and Marketing)

At the invitation of the Executive Council, Ms. Hornbuckle came to the Faculty Senate to discuss the new website and brand (“Major in You”).

Ms. Hornbuckle gave a brief history of our rebranding, noting that we worked with Fuse Ideas to identify our strengths and ideal message. The determination: we are a supportive institution with a friendly campus that offers real value to our students. The only “surprise” of the study was the consistency of results. Again and again the main selling point was that MSU is filled with faculty and staff who care. (Editorial aside: so now we have data-driven proof, verified by external consultants, that students are quite satisfied with faculty, and that those self-same students come and stay here because of the supportive faculty and staff they encounter. Hopefully this data will enter into future analyses of recruitment and retention efforts.)

Marketing has identified four brand pillars (academic excellence, student support, authentic MSU, value/affordability) that are already highlighted on the new webpage. We’re also making a concerted effort to focus on the “why”—why people choose to come and stay here. According to Ms. Hornbuckle, studies have shown that people who focus on the “why” are more successful, so this focus is one way that we’re cultivating student success.

Ms. Hornbuckle admitted that the web launch has not been without its challenges (she repeatedly referred to it as a “breach birth”). We’ve gone through three web project managers, and we’re continuing to experience some problems because (a) we’re currently operating from two separate systems (this is why web searches often go nowhere) and (b) we had to “build backwards” because we’re starting “from the ground up.” The mobile and responsive elements will be here before the break (the scheduled date is December 16th) and training for authors will begin in the Spring.

In a short Q & A session, Ms. Hornbuckle (a) demonstrated the flexibility that will be available once the site is fully up and running, (b) noted that terms that may appear odd or unhelpful to us (such as “authentic MSU”) actually tested well with students, so should serve us well, and (c) clarified the relationship between the web and the portal (the two are separate and will be completely unwedded in the new system—Marketing oversees the web; the portal is controlled by IT).

“There are some upon this earth of yours who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name” (New Business—Resolution re: Campus Climate)

Senator Rielge, on behalf of the EC, introduced a resolution that was inspired by an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and troubling local reports:

As the AAUP reminds us in its statement entitled “The atmosphere on campus in the wake of the elections,” there have been numerous troubling reports of violence and harassment across our university

and college campuses nationwide, as well as within our K-12 schools and larger communities, in the last few weeks.

We, the Morehead State University faculty, urge our colleagues and administrators to challenge all hate speech and punish harassment of vulnerable populations. Silence in the face of hate tacitly condones it, and thus we should not stay silent when we observe any such behaviors. While we appreciate that there is a need during this time “to focus upon discovery, dialogue and a determination to continuously improve,” this is not enough. We want Morehead State University to be a safe environment for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, race, immigration status, gender, or sexual orientation.

In the discussion that followed, Senator Caric moved to strike: “While we appreciate that there is a need during this time ‘to focus upon discovery, dialogue and a determination to continuously improve,’ this is not enough.” His justification for so doing is that the resolution is intended to speak to the issue in general, not specifically redress a previous email that we may not have found as helpful as it could have been. The EC accepted this motion as a friendly amendment. The statement (with the “While” line stricken) passed unanimously.

The Ghost of Senate Past (the second reading of the revised PAC-27)

Senator Carlson again walked the body through the revisions to PAC-27. Although there was some discussion of the presence of minority opinions (the older version of the PAC mandates minority positions be included in tenure letters; the revised version states that such positions may be included), there was no consensus on a possible alternative to the parameters outlined in the document on the floor. After Senator Adams moved that the revised version be approved, the motion passed. The revision will now be sent to the Provost for review and potential administrative approval.

“Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.” (Regent Report)

Regent Berglee updated the body on the search for a new president. One hundred forty-seven individuals were identified as “of interest,” forty-eight of those were “serious candidate applications,” and this “serious” group will be narrowed to a top ten by the committee. The next search committee meeting will be January 11, 2017 and 1:30 p.m. The committee still hopes to have viable candidates come to campus in March.

The next Board of Regents meeting will be December 9th in the CHER building. The BOR will be completing internal business (such as the swearing in of a new Regent) early in the morning. The substantive portion of the meeting, which will be open to the public, begins at 9:30 a.m.

“What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.” (Provost Report)

The University presidents have completed a final draft of a performance funding proposal to be submitted to Governor Bevin. Although the full scenario is far from ideal (we will be the only state yoking performance to base appropriations—all other schools have done this with new

funding only, not existing appropriations), we should be glad that the proposal has been significantly ameliorated. The new model accounts for progression toward degrees, not just degrees awarded, and offers concessions for smaller schools (like ours) as well as money to “turn the lights on.” This proposal also exempts the first year (as performance will be based on a three-year rolling average) and includes a “stop feature” so that a school can only get penalized so much. We are waiting to see what Bevin will do.

Provost Ralston asked Senator Guerin to update us on the Blue Ribbon panel. According to Senator Guerin, the work is progressing well and the campus community will be able to see actual reports in February.

The Provost noted that the Diversity taskforce (to help with the CPE Diversity Plan) has been assembled and that the Gen Ed taskforce is in the process of being assembled. He has every faith that both will meet before the end of the Fall term.

He ended with two bits of good news: Winter session is “going gangbusters”—as of yesterday we had 2700 students enrolled, so we will easily exceed last year’s haul and may even reach our \$5000 goal for this year. And, according to Dean Henson, external funding is also up. (Editorial aside: this is why we should support research—it pays. Also, you know, core academic mission and all that.)

“Will you not speak to me?” (Senate Committee Reports)

Due to the break, Senate committees did not meet last week, so there were no committee reports. The Chairs of Evaluations and Academic Issues, though, noted that their committees will be working in tandem on retention.

“God bless us, every one!” The next regular meeting of the Senate is scheduled for January 19, 2017, at 3:45 p.m.



Submitted by the 2016-2017 Faculty Senate Communications Officer, who is burdened by Man’s Ignorance and Want, and hence capable of foretelling Doom.