Steering Committee Minutes – September 12, 2008

Present: Voting Members: Xianzhong Wang (Bio), Martin O'Donnell (Chem), Snehasis Mukhopadhyay (CIS), Gary Rosenberg (Earth Sciences), Will Geller (Math), Ricardo Decca (Phy), John McGrew (Psych), Jane Williams (President), Bart Ng (Dean), Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members: Andy Gavrin (Associate Dean), Steve Randall (Past-President), Jyoti Sarkar (Secretary)

1. President Williams started the meeting at 9:02 AM.

2. One minor spelling change was noted for the previous meeting minutes and it was unanimously accepted. In a separate vote, the agenda was accepted as is.

3. Members present introduced themselves. Clarification was made about the voting privileges of members present. There are nine voting members — each department’s representative, the dean and the president have voting right. But the associate deans, the past president and the secretary do not vote. Their presence is important for ready availability of information and for ensuring the continuity of the Committee from year to year.

4. President Williams enunciated the roles of the Steering Committee, details of which can be found at http://sos.science.iupui.edu/facultycouncil/bylaws.htm. To summarize, this committee serves as the primary legislative body of the School of Science. The members of this committee represent their departments and are responsible for effective communication between the faculty of their departments and this committee, including circulating the minutes of Faculty Assemblies. The members also are representatives of the Faculty to the higher administration and are charged with receiving, reviewing, initiating and making recommendations regarding the general welfare of the faculty, administrative practice and policies, long-range plans, budgetary matters, advising and collaborating with the Dean, calling Faculty Assembly meetings and setting its agenda, and conducting ballots as necessary. Past President Randall emphasized that this committee is another conduit of communication between the Dean’s Administration and the faculty body other than the Chairs Council.

5. Since assuming office last April, Dean Ng has talked to members of all departments except Mathematical Sciences. He discovered that many faculty members do not have a clear idea how decisions are made in their department. He found out that departments other than Mathematical Sciences and Computer and Information Science do not have a written constitution. For clarity, openness and to avoid conflict, it is important to have a departmental constitution. Dean Ng charged the Steering Committee to take the leadership to urge each department to develop its constitution, taking as a start the constitutions that already exist so as to save time. President Williams will contact Math and CIS chairs to get their constitutions and disseminate them to the other departments. By way of suggestion Dean Ng mentioned that during his time as Chair of Math, a Committee of Full Professors wrote the constitution and it was voted into acceptance by the full faculty of the department. Perhaps other departments can follow this model or develop their own. Again, the Dean recommended that among items to be addressed in the constitution should be the delineation of the prerogative of the tenured and tenure-track faculty (such as the overall
curriculum) and the role of the lecturers. While we subscribe to democratic principles, the academy should not function solely as the voice of the majority. The various departments should not have identical constitutions, but they should all contain a common set of core values.

6. The committee revisited an issue from previous year — a change to the bylaws to include or allow for electronic balloting was proposed in April 2008. A mail ballot will be conducted to solicit faculty opinion on this proposed change. Williams and Sarkar will contact Steering Committee members to distribute the mail ballot, perhaps at their departmental meetings to ensure a high level of response.

7. The School of Science Bylaws of the Faculty stipulates calling a Faculty Assembly Meeting each semester and Special Faculty Assembly Meetings as needed. In view of this, the Fall Faculty Assembly Meeting needs to be scheduled soon. Dean Ng recommended that we choose a date early, advertise it hard and urge everyone to attend. Williams and Sarkar will determine the date, time and place (preferably Friday 10-noon, early November, University Library auditorium). Dean Ng will look into the possibility of inviting IU President McRobbie to either the Fall Faculty Assembly, or the Spring Faculty Assembly.

Rosenberg requested that a periodic brief email be sent to notify the faculty members about important issues discussed at the Steering Committee meetings, such as the master planning. After some discussion, it was decided that the Steering Committee representative should summarize and disseminate the meeting deliberations to their respective departments as soon as practicable. The minutes of the meetings should be first shared by email among the Steering Committee members as a provisional draft. The members should suggest changes to the minutes within a few days. Once a majority votes in favor of accepting the minutes the draft will become accepted. Then the minutes will be posted on the School website, and an email will be sent to all faculty members regarding the upload.

8. Dean Gavrin reported that the School of Science undergraduate enrollments are up. It is the second largest increase among all schools on campus, after Kelly School of Business. Out-of-state enrollments are also up for IUPUI — this year it is 10%, including graduate and professional students. Campus housing is already full and IUPUI has contracted 400 beds in the Candlewood Suites (previously, River Point). Campus will push for expanding student housing.

9. Dean Ng has compiled a pro forma Budget that accounts for all income and expenditure of the School. He shared a two-page spread sheet summary with the caveat that it should be read as a learning tool (the numbers are not exact and a lot remains unsaid) by the Steering Committee members, not to be widely publicized (in view of the explanations he provided below, which are not documented on these summary sheets, but are necessary to understand them). Dean Ng urged each Committee member to ask questions and promised to meet with them both individually and collectively to answer them. Randall asked if we need a committee to work with the Dean on budget affairs. Ng encouraged the Steering Committee to decide if that’s what it would recommend and promised to work with such a committee, if so formed. Dean urged each Committee member to ask questions and promised to meet with them both individually and collectively to answer them.
Income — Dean Ng explained each item on the income sheet. He drew attention to the bottom line: Operating Budget = Budgeted income + appropriation - assessment. The Operating Budget has been relatively steady for the school of science and all other schools over the last ten years. The “Delaware” data suggest that the per credit hour cost from highest to lowest is engineering, science, then liberal arts, with science being much closer to engineering than liberal arts. However, for IUPUI, the school of science per credit hour cost is actually slightly below that of liberal arts. McGrew asked what we can do to ensure that the budgeted income increases. Ng explained generating more tuition is helpful, but is not sufficient. What is needed most is perhaps a change in the way central administration views academic priorities. A recent example is how CTE expenditures were targeted on this campus vs. at Bloomington. Bloomington collected $1000 per student in CTE and used the funds for over 100 new faculty lines throughout the university. IUPUI got $800 per student and spent most of it in building up the supporting structure which was admittedly very poor to begin with. Only about 15 faculty appointments were made and several of these were for advancing the campus’s effort in Civic Engagement. The EVC office is making an effort to slowly shift money back to core academic units such as liberal arts and science. IUPUI will also be asking for an additional $200 per student in CTE funds that we did not get earlier. Dean Ng has been asked to help make a case for additional CTE funds based on potential impact on the core academic programs on our campus. Also, the University is moving toward a year-round budgeting cycle that would encourage the schools to plan ahead throughout the year rather than wait until the last week when state legislature is in session to have a clear idea about budget.

We also need to change the way we think about budget. Budget is a tool and it is of no use unless we have a clearly articulated goal to achieve with it. Our fiscal management system had been very weak. There was no overall strategy, each Chair attempted to get from the Dean whatever he/she could get. Dean Ng’s operating principle is that the idea should drive the budget, not the other way round. Of course, we have to be fiscally responsible and have a clean and balanced budget. Dean Ng ensures that each Chair, if he/she can use the money better, has the freedom to do so. There will be no pressure to withdraw funds used for a more appropriate purpose than initially allocated for. For example, how much start-up fund should be allocated? Not a blanket amount for each position. It should be negotiated. The new faculty must articulate his/her need. Only then will we know they have a definite plan to utilize it properly. What did we get out of the start-ups? Some accountability must be built into the process. Money cannot be secured ahead of time, but must be argued for based on commitment to excellence. EVC Sukhatme wants us to hire the best people, and he has promised to help when we do hire the best. But we must present the candidate. In the best case scenario, starting from 102 now, in the next two years, the tenured and tenure-track faculty size will rise back to the level of 1997, viz. 124.

Expenditure — The School’s expenditure is broadly categorized as personnel, general S&E (included in the departmental allocations), instructional support (such as part-time instructors and teaching assistants) and non-instructional support (such as graduate student support in the form of fellowships and research assistantships). Although the budget sheet shows a $½M deficit the school is financially in the black, because the start-up commitments are not payable within the single year and also because we have a $1.4M surplus from last year due to increased enrollment and salary savings due to loss of faculty.
This surplus will be utilized to create a permanent line of approximately $1.3-1.4M per year to cover start-up costs. Also if enrollment meets expectation this year, a fixed line for graduate student support will be created.

Mukhopadhyay asked how open lines are determined. Dean Ng explained that lines open up because of death, resignation and other reasons such as transfer of responsibility. But he also said not to look at open lines to determine whether you can or cannot hire. Use this sheet as an educational tool. The Dean does have some additional open lines to be distributed appropriately. Make a good case and a line will be made available. Nor should you necessarily fill every open line, lest you lose it. There is no such threat. Recruitment is a state of mind.

Regarding departmental allocations, Dean Ng said that reallocation, if needed, will be made on principles, not arbitrarily. Departments should not only balance the budget, but also use the budget as a tool for building up the school. They should streamline their operations and use the leftover money for new projects as deemed appropriate.

The instructional costs per credit hour in most departments in the school are lower than the national figures in the “Delaware” data, biology and chemistry being extremely low. These Delaware numbers should be used in a relative sense as a target, as we adjust departmental allocations.

Finally, Dean Ng emphatically denied any subliminal message in the budget sheets such as “the instructional expenditure is the only metric to be used to judge performance with no emphasis on research component.” No such intention is hidden.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 AM.