Steering Committee Minutes – February 13, 2009

Voting Members: Present: Jane Williams (President), Bart Ng (Dean), Xianzhong Wang (Bio), Marty O’Donnell (Chem), Snehasis Mukhopadhyay (CIS), Gary Rosenberg (Earth Sc), Will Geller (Math Sc), Ricardo Decca (Phys), John McGrew (Psych)

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members: Steve Randall (Past-President), Jyoti Sarkar (Secretary)

1. President Williams started the meeting at 9:03 AM.

2. The minutes of the previous meeting was accepted. The agenda was accepted, with the addition of one new item proposed by Rosenberg concerning return of a portion of overhead costs to grant owners.

3. Spring Assembly is scheduled for March 27, 9:00AM-11:00AM in Lilly Auditorium of University Library. President Williams reported that IU President McRobbie’s schedule did not permit him to address the Spring Assembly. Perhaps we can try to bring him in at the next Fall Assembly. The agenda for the Spring Assembly will be finalized at the next Steering Committee meeting on March 13.

4. Building Proposal: Dean Ng shared a document entitled “Multidisciplinary Laboratory & Classroom (MLC) Building Project Description & Justification”. This document was prepared by the deans of the School of Science (SOS) and the School of Engineering & Technology (E&T) in consultation with various committee members and chairs of the two schools. Dean Ng has communicated this document and also some differences that arose between the two schools to Chancellor Bantz, who will present the MLC Building proposal to President McRobbie.

The MLC will provide additional teaching and research laboratory and classroom space and will be designed to foster collaborative teaching and research between the SOS and E&T, in areas that are consistent with the life and health science mission of IUPUI. It will address the existing shortage of space, ensure the continuing growth of collaborative research between the two schools and the IUSOM, anticipate space needs for emerging academic and research programs, enhance efficiency of use of expensive research facilities, provide outstanding educational opportunities and enable faculty competitiveness for securing external funding in key areas.

The allocation of space between the SOS and E&T remains a work in progress. President McRobbie explicitly stated that “the purpose of the new [MLC] building will be to provide laboratory and related space to support the education of undergraduate and graduate students in chemistry and biology, primarily in the Schools of Science and Engineering at IUPUI.” The Lugar Center, for example, does not fit the President’s purpose. Indeed no one should view space in MLC as an entitlement, but justify their need for space based on their objective. For example, chemistry has decided to keep its teaching labs in the original building, and possibly
expand to nearby areas and get new research labs in the MLC. The assignment of space should be based on needs and facts, both existing and new, and ought to be guided by a committee chaired by the EVC.

The proposal calls for sizing the building to meet final program requirements for the next ten years, even if some parts are initially shelled in because of budget constraint. The interior may be finished in phases with the following priority ordering: teaching labs, undesignated research space, vivarium, BME, psychobiology, rest of undesignated space, faculty and graduate student offices, SOS administration and classrooms.

The MLC project is not a capital appropriation. Hence, there is no need for seeking funds from the state legislature. However, the University still needs legislature imprimatur to borrow money. If a $20M loan is approved, the project will cost annually $1.6M, of which 60% must be carried by the two schools and the campus will tax all schools to generate the remaining 40%. Thus, the SOS and E&T will need to provide 1M$ per year. If a $40M loan is approved, then the two schools will contribute 2M$ per year.

Decca asked if designated space for Engineering/Physics-Class Processing Clean Rooms can be obtained in the MLC. Dean Ng responded that the need for such Clean Rooms is recognized. However, as they are highly expensive, it is not feasible to argue for them at this time. The demand should be postponed for a later time, after the more urgent needs are met.

5. Budget: IUPUI has emerged relatively unscathed from the current economic recession. IUPUI receives 13.5% of its budget as state appropriation. The state legislature asked us to return 1.0% of the appropriation. The academic units will return 0.53% (the SOS share is about $30K), while rest of the cuts will be borne by the Service Units. Our tuition income is healthy; it is over $2M this year. Next year’s enrollment looks promising, as more people return to school during recessions in order to improve their employment opportunities. There is no noticeable decline in our revenue.

There is a freeze on administrators’ salaries. Also permanent replacement of clerical persons is frozen, although temporary replacement is permissible. President McRobbie’s policy is not to put the burden on the faculty. Indeed he envisions this is a good opportunity to raise the quality of the faculty. The campus administration is allowing the schools to make their own judgments in hiring and retaining the best faculty.

6. Graduate Students: The exact numbers of teaching assistantships for the various departments have not been finalized. Dean Ng ensures that each department will have sufficient funding to support no fewer graduate students than last year’s. He also urges each department to hire the best teaching assistants, irrespective of in-state or out-of-state status. As of last October, Dean’s Office is meeting the differential in the tuition reimbursements.
7. Grant Overhead: Rosenberg asked if there is a new policy on the return of overhead costs to grant owners. Dean Ng anticipates a new policy will go in effect in about a month or two, after he gets more information on the cost of space in the MLC and after faculty recruitments are finalized. He intends to give incentive to grant owners, but at the same time he wants to achieve stability and predictability in building a revenue stream to fund start-up expenses.

8. Departmental representatives gave status report on faculty hiring in their departments. Psychology is likely to hire one senior member with RO1, one junior member in clinical and possibly a third member. Chemistry is hiring for two positions. In organic chemistry 3 of their top 5 candidates have already accepted positions elsewhere. In general chemistry, 2 have been interviewed; perhaps 3 or 4 more will be interviewed. Biology has 2 to 3 positions and is conducting phone interview of the top 16 candidates. Mathematical Sciences has many strong junior candidates being interviewed in general and applied math; one outstanding senior candidate will be interviewed two weeks later. In statistics, the top candidate already has accepted the offer. Computer Science has a new opportunity that opened up unexpectedly when the Office of Assistant Chancellor for Diversity forwarded the application of a very strong candidate with impressive records. Dean Ng encouraged any department to bring up exceptional cases to his attention.

In response to Wang’s request to define minority, Dean Ng explained that someone is considered a minority if the available pool of candidates in the same category is below a certain threshold and the representation of that category in your unit is sufficiently below the national average. For example, in Statistics women are not a minority since 40% of fresh PhDs are women, whereas in Nursing a man is a minority. Other minority groups are African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans. Typically, the University contributes $50K per year towards the salary of a minority candidate.

9. Wang asked the dean the dollar range of start-up packages. Dean responded that there is no predetermined amount. Again, start-up funds are not entitlements, but are need based. The candidate must put in writing how much they need, what for and how the money will be spent. This exercise forces the candidate to plan well, ensures accountability and eliminates possible misunderstanding. At the low end, a math faculty may need only $30K, whereas in the experimental sciences start-up amounts can range over $85K-360K.

10. Dean Ng left the meeting at 10:25 AM. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to planning for administrative reviews of deans and chairs. Also President Williams announced that EVC Sukhatme will meet with the Steering Committee next Friday, February 20, 10:00-11:00AM in AO 102 to discuss the Acting Dean position.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 AM.