Steering Committee Minutes – March 13, 2009

Voting Members: 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: Andy Gavrin (Associate Dean), Steve Randall (Past President), Jyoti Sarkar (Secretary)

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

2. The minutes of the previous meeting was accepted. The agenda was accepted, with the addition of one new business proposed by Geller to endorse a proposal from the Staff Council.

3. Faculty Hires: Departmental representatives gave status report on faculty hiring in their departments. Psychology has hired two members: one in clinical psychology and the other in psychobiology. Mathematical Sciences has hired one junior statistician and one junior mathematician, and is in discussion with a senior mathematician. Also a search is going on for a lecturer in actuarial science. Biology has an interview going on today and they will recommend filling two positions by the end of the day. The search is still open for a third position in immunology. Chemistry has two offers in progress. Computer Science has made an offer to a very strong candidate.

Dean Ng mentioned that the School will add 10-12 faculty members this year, and if the budget holds, by next year we can recover back to the level we had six years ago.

4. SOS Report at the 2009 IUPUI Budget Hearing: Dean Ng distributed a document summarizing some general observations, some positives, some challenges and some initiatives being undertaken at the SOS.

General Observation: State support is decreasing and the budget is driven by tuition. A private school model for growth needs to be adopted.

Positives: Enrollment pattern is shifting — remedial courses have been reduced, more courses for majors are offered and the quality of incoming students is increasing. Overall enrollment trend continues to be healthy. The administration’s branding IUPUI as a STEM campus and allocating more scholarship funds have helped increase enrollments in the SOS. The new RCM model is being implemented to allocate resources to departments with clear justifications and with incentive to encourage economy, efficiency, quality improvement and creativity. Faculty recruitment continues to be the highest priority.

Challenges: the most prominent is the acute shortage of space. This impedes student progress and allows very little student support service, limits student involvement in undergraduate research, undercuts faculty competitiveness for external funding and hinders improvement of academic programs. Chancellor Bantz, has presented the
MLC Building proposal to President McRobbie, who has not made any decision yet, since funding is not clear. As a stop-gap measure, space may have to be rented in the Medical Science Building basement. Another challenge is that not all costs are under the control of the School. Also, faculty morale and attitude, though greatly improved because of aggressive recruitment efforts, still remain skeptical.

5. Initiatives: Dean Ng noted that Student Services at the departmental level are reasonably okay, but the same is not true at the School level. A new Career Counseling Center, along the line of the Business School, has been proposed. It will arrange internship and employment opportunities for the students. The student Council is supportive of this proposal and the associated fee. Approximately, $300K per year will be collected as a career counseling fee.

There is a plan to integrate the school’s development, student recruitment and alumni relations efforts. The School’s development effort is being restructured. The Dean’s Leadership Council is being revitalized in preparation for the next Campaign for IUPUI in 2010. Student recruitment effort is targeting high-ability students, their parents and high school counselors. The baseline for donors has not changed over the last decade. More effort is needed to convert the alumni into donors. Foundation support has been minimal. It is not enough to simply submit proposals to foundations. More communications are needed to learn about the foundation’s objectives, change their perceptions about the School and to adapt our proposals to fit their objectives. Such tasks are better suited for a professional development officer, who will coordinate fund-raising activities, reshape student recruitment/service and alumni relations. The school will invest $300K per year toward this effort.

Geller asked how we will know the impact of this investment. In response, Dean Ng said that we should not only look at the gift amount, but also at the number of new contacts made, yield rate of early admits, student satisfaction of their experience and more parental involvement, among others, as indicators of success of the development officer.

Randall enquired how we can ensure that our graduates feel a stronger affiliation with us than with IU or Purdue. Dean Ng responded that they are not captive to any one school. In fact, national data indicate donors have the strongest allegiance to their high schools. Gavrin mentioned that people give to a place where they had experienced being part of a community. Our commuter campus image of yester years has to be countered. One way to do that is to enhance our student clubs.

6. Student Technology Fee (STF): Dean Gavrin reported that Chancellor Bantz has accepted a proposal put forth by IU VP for IT Brad Wheeler. Under this proposal, administration of the STF income will be entirely turned over to UITS (at present, ~40% of the fee has been administered by the schools). Representatives from each school will work with UITS over the next three years to work out a transition plan. UITS will ensure staff funding for the first year. Thereafter, they may either directly hire the staff or transfer the money to the school for staff funding. Also, Dean Gavrin mentioned that lab fees may have to be restructured to fund student equipment, as the
technology fees were not advertised to do so in the first place. Dean Ng mentioned that this is a good time to reexamine our IT operation within the school as a whole.

7. Salary raises: There is a freeze on salary raises for administrators (at the rank of chairs and higher) who are already earning over $100K. There has been no decision on tuition raise yet. The campus administration is allowing the schools to make their own judgments in hiring and retaining the best faculty. Dean Ng thinks salary raise for faculty will be comparable to that of last several years.

8. Agenda for Spring Assembly: Three major items were identified — (1) Reports from various Committee Chairs; (2) Deans’ reports on enrollment, research, budget and new initiatives; and (3) Election of Secretary of Faculty Council, who essentially makes a three year commitment — the first year as Secretary, the second year as President and the third year as Past President. Please personally encourage faculty members in your respective departments to volunteer to serve as Secretary-President-Past President. Any other items for the agenda should be sent to President Williams or Secretary Sarkar. In view of Spring Break next week, the complete agenda will be distributed to the entire faculty assembly on Monday, March 23.

9. New Business. Geller presented a request from the Chair of Staff Council to endorse a proposal for raising the Staff Award amount from $1000 to $2500 to maintain parity with all other faculty and lecturer awards. A motion was made to endorse the proposal and seconded. The motion passed with 6 in favor, 1 opposed and 3 abstaining. The Nominations and Awards Committee will discuss the proposal, together with this endorsement, and communicate their recommendation to Dean Ng.

10. Deans Ng and Gavrin left the meeting at 10:45 AM, so that the Subcommittee on Administrative Review could discuss how to disseminate the results of the recently conducted administrative reviews of deans and chairs. It was decided that the deans and the chairs will receive written comments verbatim, but these will be edited appropriately when shared with the faculty.

11. President Williams asked the Steering Committee members to encourage their department members to attend the Spring Faculty Assembly scheduled for Friday, March 27, 9:00-11:00AM in Lilly Auditorium of University Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 AM.