Steering Committee Minutes – May 08, 2009

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

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

Guest: Phil Scarpino, President of School of Liberal Arts Faculty Assembly.

Because of the sensitive nature of the discussion that took place during the first half of this meeting, only a brief sketch of the minutes is being posted on the web. Faculty members are urged to talk to their departmental representative for further details.

1. President Williams called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM. She welcomed Dr. Scarpino to the meeting to discuss our two schools’ mutual concerns about IUPUI Central Administration. President Williams summarized that the SOS is very seriously concerned about the administration’s lack of leadership, lack of transparency in decision making and lack of commitment to strengthen the academic core of the campus. The SOS proposes to write a letter to the Chancellor Review Committee (RC) explaining these concerns. She has talked with a member of the RC who mentioned that the RC is open to any and all feedbacks on the Chancellor’s performance. She invited Scarpino to express the views of the faculty in the SLA.

2. Scarpino mentioned that among issues that concern the SLA faculty several predate the Chancellor’s term in office. Nonetheless, he has done little to address them. Among the major concerns are: (1) The faculty seems to have become invisible to the administration, (2) The assessment exceeded the state appropriation for the last five years. The SLA is running on tuition and grants, (3) The University is steering a course that discourages students to major in the liberal arts, (4) In August 2006 the campus raised the cost of graduate student health insurance, but did not inform the directors of graduate programs to make necessary adjustments, and (5) The University is taking away technology fees from the school. In response to a strongly worded letter from the SLA faculty, the Chancellor only made a public relations blitz.

3. There are parallel examples in the SOS. Williams mentioned that although IU President McRobbie announced a new laboratory building in October 2008 and the Building Committee worked very hard over the next four months to prepare a proposal by the February deadline, Chancellor Bantz has met with the Committee only in April 2009. McGrew commented that the way it was decided to move 100% of student technology fees to UITS lacked transparency. When IU Vice President for IT Brad Wheeler and Associate Vice President for IT Garland Elmore disclosed this decision to the deans they asked them not to talk about it to the EVC Sukhatme or to their department chairs. Rosenberg stated that the administration wants new PhD programs without making funding commitments. Scarpino mentioned Sukhatme’s
desire to see a PhD program in Public History, but there was no assurance that the funding for the successful masters program will remain intact.

4. The concerns of the two schools, though their examples differ, have the following common themes: (1) The administration’s neglect of the academic core units is hurting the students, (2) Failure to engage faculty governance in decision making undermines academic health, and (3) Failure to respond to complaints appropriately is causing embarrassment to the University.

5. McGrew enquired whether redefining Chancellor Bantz’s position to include campus wide responsibilities has left us with no one person with executive power solely focused on IUPUI. Bantz appears to be not involved in the day to day affair of IUPUI. The deans are trying to do what they can without proper support. Wang pointed out that Bantz gave no input on the new laboratory building during proposal writing, and yet had a lot of criticism after the proposal was submitted.

6. Williams will lead a subcommittee to draft a letter highlighting that the IUPUI administration (a) exhibits a crisis of leadership, (b) does not engage the faculty, (c) responds to objections by public relation blitz, (d) is harming both schools in attracting and retaining faculty and students, (e) espouses an assessment system that not only milks the cow, but also sucks the life out of it, and (f) is becoming so isolated that the next logical step would be a vote of no confidence. The draft will be shared with all SC committee members, and the approved letter will be signed by Scarpino, Williams and Sarkar (the 2009-2010 President of SOS Faculty Assembly). The letter will be addressed to the Chancellor Review Committee, the IU President and the UFC President.

Mukhopadhyay enquired whether a joint letter will carry more weight than two separate letters. It was determined that a joint letter carries an additional impact in establishing that the faculty in both schools felt so strongly about the issues that they actually got together to discuss them. A discussion followed whether to involve the School of Engineering and Technology in this effort. It was felt that even though no one in SET is very thrilled about the University leadership, their challenges and concerns are perhaps different from those of the SOS and the SLA.

Rosenberg hoped that the letter will contain some of the material in the national press covering the administration’s mistreatment of the Keith John Sampson, whom the administration found guilty of racial harassment for merely reading a book during his break. He offered to send the link to the video that F.I.R.E. (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education) made on the case.

7. The Associate Deans joined the meeting at 10:00 AM after Scarpino left. President Williams summarized for them the decision to write a joint letter to the Chancellor RC, the IU President and the UFC President and urged the associate deans of SOS and SLA also to write another letter. Dean Gavrin agreed to get in touch with his counterpart in SLA.
8. Dean Murphy gave an update on the building proposal. The chancellor remains uncommitted. He seems to give us some leeway to do what we want, as long as we find the funding for it. A task force has been formed to study the vivarium proposal. A similar study five years ago concluded that SOS needs twice the space it has. Now with the emergence of new programs, space need is three to four times that available. The task force will study the overall need for the campus and investigate whether consolidation is the answer. For the type of research the SOS does, consolidation is not going to be cost effective. Transporting animals from a central facility will raise cost. It will also raise stress levels of the animals, and the researchers will have to wait until they calm down.

9. We had hoped the NCRR RFA proposal would fund the vivarium. But our proposal was not one of the three selected from IUPUI. The decision remains shrouded in mystery. No information on the selection process came out of the VCR’s Office. The decision was arbitrary; it lacked transparency; and it produced the desired outcome. This is not in sync with the academic procedure of peer review which allows the best proposal to win.

10. Since the legislature failed to pass a budget by the end of April, not much is known about salary raises. There will be no raise for administrators at the rank of chair or above earning $100K or more. The budget may become clearer only in late June.

11. This year the number of freshman directly admitted to the SOS is up by 15.7% (at the 96% point in the cycle). Of these direct admits, about 40% are from the top 10% of their high school class. Last year, a little less than 50% of direct admits actually enrolled, and the enrolled class had a slightly higher GPA than those admitted. We expect the patterns to continue, thanks to the letters, postcards and phone calls from the departments and from Dean Gavrin’s staff. The number of all undergraduate science majors registered for Fall is up 24% (at the 50% point in the cycle), while the number of credit hours of science courses registered for Fall is up 13% (at the 50% point in the cycle). See [http://imir.iupui.edu/picx/](http://imir.iupui.edu/picx/) for up to date information.

For continuing students, registration is up by 20% of last year’s numbers at this time. But fewer than 50% of continuing students have registered. The SOS is graduating the largest class this year (three years in a row). The graduation is on May 10. The University ceremony is at 3:00PM and the SOS ceremony at 5:00PM.

12. The SOS Technology Committee will meet a group from UITS on May 20. Several routine issues are being pre-negotiated. Out of a budget of $715K, roughly 44% is staff pay, including salary, benefits and assessment. UITS has agreed to pay staff salary for the next year, and is reviewing our request for life-cycle replacement of all computer lab equipments, the plotter at Earth Sciences and software licenses. They have also agreed to fund a webmaster at 35% FTE for the first year and at half that for the second year. Other issues yet to be negotiated include how to fund specialized student labs such as the chemistry resource center, the math lab and the testing center. UITS is willing to provide only those services that are usable by all students. They expect us to run the specialized labs and develop software for enhancing testing
center operations. Our position is that UITS should pay for these services. McGrew commented that UITS appears to being quite understanding the first year. But what they do three years from now is more critical.

13. Old Business: As a follow-up to the recently conducted reviews of the chairs and the deans, Wang read a couple of questions raised by his department members. (1) Why do we keep separate the evaluations by TTF and NTTF members? (2) For those members who took the time to write comments and yet their comments did not get included, how can it be a democratic process? The answer to the first question is that the SOS bylaws mandate the separation of evaluations by TTF and NTTF members. The non-inclusion of some comments resulted because of a decision of the SAR (subcommittee on administrative review) to include comments only if there were at least three within the group. This decision can be revised by the SAR. Alternatively, an optional check box “I want my comments to be made public” can be provided. These are decisions for the next year’s SAR. It was decided that for this year, revised reports that include numerical data but withhold comments will be sent out to the departments that were affected by the SAR decision.

14. Randall mentioned that his term as an at-large member of the UFC will end soon. We should select someone else to fill the role by Fall.

15. There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM.