The joint session of the meeting of Academic Staff Representatives and Faculty Representatives was chaired by Stephen Kolison, Associate Vice President for Academic, Faculty and Global Programs. Stephen commenced the meeting at 10:10 a.m. First, Stephen asked Randy Olson, Faculty Representative from UW, who serves on the working group chaired by UW-Stout Provost Julie Furst-Bowe and Stephen, to summarize the progress of the Program Planning and Review Working Group since its formation in January, 2012. Randy reported that the committee’s preliminary recommendations are that program planning processes will be streamlined, that processing time will be driven down, and that the role of UW System Administration will be reduced to focus on program array management. A pre-authorization phase will require a Letter of Intent from the proposing institution that replaces the current request for entitlement. Authorization proposals, containing no more than 10 pages will replace the current Board of Regents (BOR) and UW System guidelines. Institutions will take on increased responsibility for quality. The BOR and UW System Administration will still exercise their statutory responsibilities. Asked about his overall impression of the group’s recommendations, Randy indicated that input from representatives from across System was appreciated and that the substantive changes will need to be aligned with new and better processes determined by the institutions. Stephen added that now would be a good time to
examine each institution’s program planning and approval processes since they may need to be updated in the light of the working group’s recommendation. Randy emphasized that it’s important to make sure that proposals follow all governance regulations. Stephen added that extensive consultation will happen when the group forwards its recommendations.

The question was raised on whether the BOR has been part of the discussion and whether their roles will also be changing. Randy responded that possible changes affecting the responsibilities of the BOR have not been discussed in detail. Chapter 36 still determines their and System administration’s statutory roles. The Education Committee of the BOR will review the recommendations. In response to a question on whether System Administration will still look at duplication, Stephen affirmed that evaluation of duplication issues will still be done as part of managing array and meeting regional and national accountability requirements.

Al Crist, Associate Vice President, UWSA Human Resources & Workforce Diversity briefed the group on the new Personnel Systems and Committees. Regular meetings between UW-Madison and UW System regarding alignments of processes have taken place and continue. He clarified the timelines and assured the group that governance review is built into the timeline. While the UW-Madison and UW System projects are on separate timelines, they will converge in December when they will be presented to the Legislature for approval. Starting in April, preliminary group recommendations will be shared at each institution by HR directors. In June, the BOR will receive an update. Until mid-October of 2012 there will be an opportunity for feedback before the final recommendations go to the Board in December, 2012. Likely, the materials will go to the joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER) in February, 2013. Substantive changes may include how the pay plans will be approved moving forward. Some technical changes are needed to fulfill legislative intent. The Office of State employment Relations (OSER) will likely no longer approve pay plans. We are requesting that the BOR will have the authority to approve the pay plan, with some flexibility for the Chancellors to decide how to use the pay plan allocation, and will likely no longer require BOR recommendation to JCOER or OSER. As part of this new institutional flexibility, each institution will be able to use base dollars at the institution for merit increases. The latter is currently only possible for classified staff but not for Academic staff or faculty.

The proposed change in allocation of base dollars will create consistency throughout the new personnel system. However, resource questions were not all solved yet and priorities will have to be set. In response to a question whether Madison will get a larger share of resources, Al confirmed that percentage wise all institutions get the same amount of pay plan money; UW-Madison gets more total dollars because they have a higher percentage of payroll share. Importantly, all proposed changes will have to be approved by July 2013. Al also explained that we are recommending that dollars generated by the institutions can be used for pay plan. Al agreed that each institution’s governance groups can invite Jason Beier or him to explain the changes to on-campus constituents. Further, Al affirmed that many of the policies review currently in place at institutional level, will continue after the personnel system is approved.

The implementation of May Multiples is progressing and will allow employees to spread the costs out over two or three months this year.

David Giroux, Executive Director of Communications & External Relations, recapped that the annual “Posters in the Rotunda” undergraduate research showcase was held at the Capitol on
March 8th. New this year was the use social media to show their accomplishments and their participation.

Dave announced that two new Regents will be seated in June. He then summarized a new bill (AB318) that revises existing policies affecting rehired annuitants. The new bill requires a waiting period of 75 days for retirees to be re-hired by a UW System institution. An amendment was introduced to exempt staff not funded by GPR.

Next, Dave gave a short overview of AB 322. This bill will require publishers to send all UW System institutions, upon request, an accessible electronic format of textbooks or copyrighted documents that our students with visual impairments, learning disabilities or other needs for alternative text formats, to be able to access them promptly and adequately, or to give disability services offices the opportunity to transcribe them into the needed format in a timely manner. An authorization to convert has been given to one of our institutions, and all other institutions that use the same edition of the book for academic purposes, can share the document without a need to request authorization a second time. Institutions will also be able to share the accessible text with WTCS and independent colleges and universities in Wisconsin. The bill protects the intellectual rights of the publishers and at the same time provides an accessible format of the textbook or document to students in a timely manner.

Dave then updated the group on AB 558, which deals with evaluation of Wisconsin teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs need to be evaluated but the process is collaborative since it allows for input from institutions. DPI supports the bill and the UW System has no taken a position on the bill.

AB539 targets the privatization of available retirement plans. The proposed retirement plan will allow for transfer of state employees’ pension plan (WRS) to TIAA-CREF So some portability will be allowed.

Further, Dave shared that the UW-Madison student newspaper The Badger Herald filed an open records request regarding the use of remaining balances on meal cards and how they are reimbursed or used if students don’t claim them. The Wisconsin State Journal also received an open records request regarding outside agent recruitment in China and dual degrees between international and UW System institutions. This follows an investigation at Dickinson University where investigators discovered fraud regarding degree issuance that seemed improper.

Finally, Dave turned to the new voter I.D. law and the imperative to educate students about the new rules. The question is whether a university ID is compliant with the policy. Almost all UW System institutions have issued new I.D.s. Questions also remain regarding the definition of “continuous enrollment.” Does that mean that a student has to be enrolled during the summer? The BAC needs to decide before the June elections.

The meeting ended following further discussion among Academic Staff Representatives, including informal discussions with Mark Nook and Stephen Kolison.