The Faculty Representatives last met in Madison on Friday, February 27th. We met as a group in the morning and then in the afternoon we met with various officials from UW System. Among the major issues discussed were the following:

1. **Budget.** We discussed the grim budget news, with certain reps particularly distressed at campus reserve accounts being targeted. Rebecca Martin, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, encouraged faculty to communicate directly with their local legislators about system-related concerns, especially salary.

2. **Salary Issues.** (a) We discussed the special recruitment and retention fund (aka “the star fund”), with several reps troubled by the lack of faculty input on the distribution of funds on their campuses. There was a sense that the Regents and the Governor see the fund as a business-model solution to recruitment and retention woes and are thus unlikely to abandon it. (b) Al Crist, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, told us that the June salary increase—which most of us won’t see until October—is still on. He reminded us that salary adjustments due to changes in rank will continue as usual, as they’re distinct from performance-based salary increases. He had no information on the extent to which the cost to employees of benefits will increase. (c) A request that President Reilly report to the Regents on salary issues at least once a semester was received favorably. (d) Ed Meachen, Associate Vice President for Learning & Information Technology, reported on efforts to allow faculty to choose to receive their salaries over 12 rather than 9 months. As they estimate it would cost about $400K in up-front programming costs and would require over $500K annually to administer, they have decided against offering a 12-month option. Ed then reported that they will now be able to withhold state taxes for Minnesota and Illinois residents.

3. **Program Realignment.** The reps discussed the efforts of a system-wide working group comprising mostly provosts to collect and analyze data on which campuses offer which programs, with an eye toward coordinating program closures (so campuses don’t simultaneously drop similar programs). Stephen Kolison, Associate Vice President for Academic and Faculty Programs, stressed that this is not a comprehensive, system-wide review of programs. The reps expressed interest in having faculty representation on the working group; if anyone is interested in serving, please let me know.

4. **3-year Baccalaureate Degrees.** The reps discussed a draft of a proposal for developing a three-year baccalaureate track at four campuses, one of which is Eau Claire. A group comprising the provosts of the interested campuses and Stephen Kolison is currently studying the issue, with a target of this August for interested campuses to be authorized to plan and offer the program. The group welcomes input; I’ll be happy to pass along the draft to anyone who’s interested.

5. **D2L.** Ed Meachen, Associate Vice President for Learning & Information Technology, reported that the UW System has renewed its contract with D2L through 2014. In addition, D2L has developed a purge tool, which will soon be put to use to purge courses prior to Fall 2005. (Every D2L course since 2003 is still on the server, to the tune of 7TB.) Courses will be maintained on D2L for at least two years and faculty will be able to preserve course content locally, and will be informed well in advance of the purge, which will begin this spring or summer.

6. **Collective Bargaining.** The reps briefly discussed attitudes toward collective bargaining on their campuses, including the decoupling of faculty and academic staff, which the enabling provision in the budget implies, though it was noted that the final version of the bill may be more flexible on this issue than it currently is. We will discuss this in more depth at our next meeting.
7. **Textbooks.** We discussed a draft of the System proposal for early adoption of textbooks. Though the proposal was aimed mainly at campuses without rental programs, the proposal noted that campuses (such as ours) with rental programs typically allow only one rental per class and suggests that this restriction be studied. In addition, the report noted that early adoption of purchase texts by faculty influences the buy-back price students receive. The Regents will consider the proposal at their May meeting, if the Faculty and Academic Staff reps support the proposal at their April meetings. As I previously reported, some Regents are laboring under the misapprehension that faculty are largely responsible for the high cost of textbooks; the reps felt that while faculty involvement in the solution might assuage Regent angst, the Regents need to understand that faculty practices are not a significant factor in the costs of textbooks.

The Faculty Representatives will next meet on April 3rd.

Respectfully submitted,

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