The Faculty Representatives last met in Madison on Friday, April 3rd. We met as a group in the morning, then met jointly with the academic staff reps, and then in the afternoon we met with various officials from UW System. Among the major issues discussed were the following:

1. **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 the current version is. Grant Huber, from the System’s Legislative Affairs office, reminded the reps that the enabling legislation sponsored by David Hansen that passed the Senate but failed to make it to the floor of the Assembly in the last legislative session proposed thirty bargaining units, and allowed units to combine; it is likely that a similar bill will be considered this session. We will discuss this in more depth as the budget bill begins to take final shape.

2. **Program Realignment.** The reps discussed the efforts of a system-wide working group comprising mostly provosts (though with a couple of faculty) 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 designed to target programs for closure.

3. **Textbooks.** We discussed a draft of the System proposal for early adoption of textbooks, modeled on the University of Maryland System’s recently adopted policy. The reps generally bristled at mandates, as opposed to suggestions, and took particular umbrage with item #6 of UMS’s policy— “Faculty should order textbook bundles only if the supplements included with the textbooks are necessary to the curriculum and instruction”— as if faculty need to be instructed not to order unnecessary materials. It seems that some Regents— both in Wisconsin and Maryland— 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.

4. **Inclusive Excellence.** Vicki Washington, Associate Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, gave a brief presentation on Inclusive Excellence, which, she stressed, was not a new initiative but rather an effort to coordinate existing efforts (e.g., Equity Scorecard, climate studies). Inclusive Excellence focuses on a broader definition of diversity than has been used previously and on communicating the well-documented educational benefits of diversity. She welcomes feedback on their work so far, which can be found on her office’s website at the UWS site.

5. **Class Absence for Military Service.** The reps discussed a motion recently passed by UW-Whitewater’s faculty senate mandating that students not be penalized for class absence due to unavoidable military obligations not exceeding two weeks. The reps agreed with Rebecca Martin’s opinion that this is a campus-rather than a System-issue. I raised the issue with the Executive Committee; we are currently reviewing our absence policies to determine if a policy such as Whitewater’s is needed or desirable.

6. **Domestic Partner Benefits.** The reps discussed the support on their campuses for the governor’s plan to create a domestic partner registry and to extend domestic partner benefits to UW System employees. Rebecca Martin informed us that the start date for this is January 1, 2010—not January 1, 2011, as originally planned. Our senate endorsed this idea in 2007.

The Faculty Representatives will next meet on May 1st.

Respectfully submitted,

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