

AAUP

NEWS

Volume XIV No. 8 May 8, 2003

BOT Chair reprimands Faculty Senate President

Mr. John Steele, Chairman of the College Board of Trustees, told Faculty Senate President Diane Stump during the April 22 Board meeting that information provided by the Senate in response to the Board's request for faculty input in the Board's evaluation of President Wright was not "credible feedback from the Faculty." Mr. Steele said the faculty input was "disturbing," "divisive," "mean-spirited," and "unconscionable."

Mr. Steele also described the information provided by the Senate as "people taking cheap shots."

In addition, Mr. Steele told Diane that she should have sent

the Senate's information directly to him to distribute, rather than mailing it to all of the Board members.

Diane responded to Mr. Steele by stating that the open-ended comments collected by the Senate and the summary letter provided by the Senate were not intended to be divisive.

Diane also told the Board that the Senate was "very frustrated" by the Board's short timeline for collecting information. Diane said the Senate is very interested in collecting the kind of evaluation data that can be used to benchmark and improve performance.

(See page 2 for a complete transcript of the remarks made

by Mr. Steele and Diane at the Board meeting.)

As reported in the April 22 issue of *AAUP News*, the Faculty Senate received notice of the Board's request for input on March 31, with a deadline of April 14 for returning information.

At a special meeting on April 2, the Senate decided to send an e-mail message to faculty requesting written statements about the President's strengths and needs for improvement in five areas: Leadership, Communication and Relationships, Decision Making, Budget Management, and Strategic Planning and Goal Setting.

see Senate reprimand/3

On the Board-Watch

by Pam Ecker,
AAUP Chapter President

I've attended more meetings of our College's Board of Trustees than have most faculty members.

I've attended more meetings of our College's Board of Trustees than have any of our current executive-level administrators.

I've attended more of our College's Board meetings than

have the majority of the current Board members.

I've been watching our Board meet since the late 1980s. I've been a more consistent visitor to meetings than have several of the appointed Board members who have come and gone during the past 15 years or so.

The style and tone and level of formality of our College's Board meetings have changed over the

years. Some Boards have held long and rambling meetings with lots of discussion, often about small things. Some Boards have devoted portions of their agenda to group presentations about various academic programs; others have preferred to applaud individual achievements of students and staff. Some Board members participate in many campus

see Board-Watch/4

Transcript: Cincinnati State Board of Trustees meeting, Apr. 22, 2003

Agenda Item 03.36: Faculty Senate Report. Senate President Diane Stump presents to the Board the Faculty Senate report, as usual, and asks for questions from the Board. Board Chairman Steele has comments, which lead to the following interchange:

Mr. Steele: I have just a couple of things that I wanted to say, Diane. I wanted to be up front with you, and the Faculty Senate. I did get the information that you sent. I did request that it be sent to me. . .

Diane: Uh huh.

Mr. Steele: . . . for my distribution to the Board. . .

Diane: Okay.

Mr. Steele: . . . when in fact it was sent out right to the Board. I think that should be my duty to distribute that information to the full Board.

Diane: Okay, I apologize.

Mr. Steele: Okay. But one thing I want to say about that report that we got—it really bothers me. I thought about it for several days, and what this Board needs is—what we were expecting to get was credible feedback from the Faculty for our consideration of the President's performance.

Diane: Okay.

Mr. Steele: And in reading through it, quite honestly—and I want you to take this in a positive way—it wasn't helpful. . .

Diane: Okay.

Mr. Steele: . . . and I found it to be very disturbing the way the comments were put forward; I found the comments to be quite divisive here to the College. I found it to be incredibly self-

-serving—uh, and mean spirited. So, I felt I wanted to put that forward, because I didn't feel right about having those comments hanging out there with no feedback. . .

Diane: Okay.

Mr. Steele: . . . so we have talked with the full Board. I believe people on the Board feel the same way. I'm hopeful, in going forward, I would like to work cooperatively—I think the administration would like to work cooperatively with the faculty, but it's very difficult to do when people are taking what I would consider to be taking "cheap shots" that are incredibly mean-spirited. Number one, I think it turns one part of the College against the other part of the College, which is not healthy for the school. I also feel when we're—when I as an individual am given information that is reported in that fashion, it makes me not take—even though—even if there were some truth in that—it makes me want to discount those comments because of their viciousness. . .

Diane: Okay.

Mr. Steele: . . . so I give those forward, and I mean my comments to be taken uh for concern for the health of this College and hopefully as a request that everybody at this College can work in unity to try and make the school better in many different ways, so take it at that.

Diane: I'd like to respond to that.

Mr. Steele: Sure.

Diane: I think you would find that the Senate feels much the same way you do. We were very frustrated with ten days to turn this information around to give

to you. We also felt it was important to give the Faculty an opportunity too—not just the Senate—because we felt we would get a much better feel, everybody needs input, and we are trying to be inclusive.

That was the reason that I put in the letter, in one of the last paragraphs, that we would like to see in the future some kind of instrument used that would be fair. We also felt that doing it this way was probably not the fairest way to do it, but with the amount of time that we had to turn it around, we felt that it was the only way we could respond. And that was why I called you and asked you what kind of information you wanted us to respond to, and I also asked Dr. Wright the same question.

There is always a danger when you ask those open-ended questions that you may not get the kind of responses that you want, and my feeling is that you don't get the kind of data to benchmark and actually improve our performance.

So I think if you had been in the meeting that we had—shortly after I talked with you to find out what you wanted—if you would have been there with the Senators, you would found that we felt very, very much the same way you do. We were not trying to be negative or divisive or any of those things, and I do understand that some of the comments could come across that way, but when you have very little to ask people to evaluate on, and you ask them to be very open-ended, it was very difficult to put that information together.

Mr. Steele: Well, you know, this information has been

see Transcript/3

BOT transcript/ continued from 2

requested over the last several years, and different devices were used, and—quite frankly—the problem I have is that this time, after seeing the same things come out, even with the instruments that we talked about that were given to you in previous years, there's no difference. And I would say this too. If you all. . . if you are in a teaching profession, you are required to evaluate all the time, and you could have created your own instrument. Now if you want us to do that for you we will do that for you. . . but. . .

Diane: No. . .

Mr. Steele:. . . we give you more credit than that, so. . .

Diane: I don't think we're asking you to do it for us, but we do need more than ten days at the end of the term. This is the

kind of thing that we would like to have some time to actually put together, have people look at, make sure that we are not biasing this kind of evaluation in any way.

Mr. Steele: Well, I guess my point is not over—uh trying to make a point over how—it's more attitude than substance. I mean to have those kinds of comments provided in a professional institution like this is unconscionable. So, those are my thoughts.

Diane: Okay. I would like to encourage you in the future that we do come up with a different instrument and an instrument that can be used over time and is one that everyone can agree to. There are some problems on this campus that we all need to work on, and I think it is important a

lot of the time to know how people perceive us, because many times our perceptions of other people are not necessarily what is reality, but sometimes by understanding other peoples' perceptions of us, we can make attempts to change it. So I do think evaluation is important, but I would encourage the Board in the future to give us more time so maybe we could come up with a better instrument, so that we really do give you information that everybody feels is helpful.

Mr. Steele: Diane, I hope that in the future you will have more time, but I hope the results are very different.

Diane: I hope so too. Thank you. Any other questions?

Mr. Steele: Okay. Any other questions or comments? If not, then we'll move on to 03.37. . . .

Faculty Senate campaigns to change State higher-ed budget

The Cincinnati State Faculty Senate is encouraging faculty and staff members to join a letter-writing campaign intended to improve support for higher education in the State budget.

The Ohio House of Representatives has passed a budget bill that eliminates nearly \$2 million previously promised to the College to help pay off the bonds issued to fund construction of the new garage and the Advanced Technology and Learning Center.

The House budget overall would increase the amount of State funds provided to the College, but not as much as the budget proposal made by Governor Taft.

The letter-writing campaign is directed to members of the Ohio Senate, since the Senate has not yet completed its budget bill.

The members of the Faculty Senate will be distributing sample letters and a list of State Senate members whose districts include the Cincinnati State service area. Faculty and staff may choose to sign the sample letter, add a personal message to the sample letter, or write their own letter. The Senate will collect completed letters and the College Development Office will help arrange for mailing.

No College funds or materials

Senate reprimand/ continued from 1

Faculty were asked to return their comments by April 8. The Senate received 29 responses. A letter summarizing the responses, and a transcript of all comments received, was mailed to all Board members and delivered to President Wright prior to the April 14 deadline.

Diane said the Faculty Senate is preparing a letter of response

can be used to support this letter-writing campaign.

Diane said Ohio residents should sign their letters as "Ohio taxpayers" since that will probably have a greater impact on legislators. Those who live in other State Senate districts should write to their own Senators also. Employees who are not Ohio residents should identify themselves as Cincinnati State employees.

to the statements made by Mr. Steele. The letter will be sent to all Board members.

Diane also said the Faculty Senate has decided to move forward with selecting a valid and reliable Presidential evaluation instrument to be administered annually, by the Senate, starting in academic year 2003-04.

On the Board-Watch/ continued from 1

events; others limit their involvement to official meetings, and Commencement. Some Board chairpersons seem more comfortable than others wielding the gavel.

Board member interactions with faculty members have varied.

In the late 80s and early 90s, any faculty members who showed up at Board meetings were definitely in the “seen but not heard” category.

Then after a while, the Faculty Senate was granted a standing place on the Board agenda. Some Board members sometimes asked questions after the Senate President’s report, and some have engaged in conversation with the Senate’s representative. A few Board chairpersons have even invited other faculty members in attendance (like me) to answer questions or make comments on some topics.

Board meeting “regulars” like me often converse informally with some Board members before or after their public meetings—although there have always been a few Board members who seem much more eager to leave than to talk.

It’s only been in the past few years that Board members have publicly berated and “debated” Faculty Senate representatives.

That’s a big change from the time just prior to the election of AAUP as the faculty union, when the then-Chairman of the Board issued a written apology to faculty for a particularly poorly-worded message which

was sent to faculty on the eve of the election.

(By the way, that anti-union, insulting-to-all-faculty message is also the historical source of our “AAUP Froggie” mascot.)

But two things have been common to all of our Boards:

There is rarely public disagreement among Board members. With very few exceptions, every Board vote is a unanimous decision.

And there is rarely substantive public discussion among Board

As a long-time watcher of our College Board of Trustees, I can’t help but wonder why the executive sessions are getting longer and the public meeting time has nearly vanished.

members about the big things facing the College every day—like the annual budget.

Over the last few years, half-page budgets have been passed unanimously, with little or no public discussion of institutional priorities.

For example, in the three budget years from 1999 to 2001 the annual budget line item for “Intercollegiate Athletics” went from over \$300,000 to over \$600,000 and then to over \$800,000 and there was never a

dissenting voice heard from a single Board member, or even a question about whether such a trend was appropriate—at least not in public.

Similarly, the Board approved a contract with Blackwell Consulting Services for over \$2 million in Information Technology management services without a single utterance of public comment other than their unanimous “yes” votes.

One can only hope that substantive discussions are occurring in the Board’s closed “executive sessions.”

Our current Board is setting records for “shortest public meeting” almost every month. With a few rare exceptions, the public portion of the Board’s meetings is finished in 30 minutes.

Ohio law is quite specific about the obligation of publicly-appointed bodies, such as our College Board of Trustees, to conduct their business in

public. The “sunshine law” language is routinely read into the record at the beginning of every Board meeting, and printed in every Board meeting agenda.

This legal language says what business can legally be conducted behind the closed doors of an executive session. The list includes (quoting the legal language):

- To consider personnel matters related to the appointment,

see Board-Watch/ 5

On the Board-Watch/ continued from 4

employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion or compensation of a public employee or official.

- To consider the purchase or sale of public property.
- To confer with an attorney concerning pending or imminent court actions.
- To discuss matters concerning collective bargaining.
- To discuss matters required to be kept confidential by federal or state law.
- To consider details of security arrangements.

In other words, the law acknowledges that a few topics ought to be discussed in private, but the law clearly intends for most topics to be discussed, debated, and voted on in public.

As a long-time Board-watcher, I can't help but wonder why the executive sessions are getting longer and the public meeting time has nearly vanished.

It's now an anomaly when

something happens like the moment at the March Board meeting when Board member Lisa FitzGibbon repeatedly asked College administrators for assurances that the new \$25-per-term Technology and Student Activity Fee would provide benefits to students quickly.

And it's becoming less of an anomaly than it should be to hear the Board Chair characterize faculty expressions of concerns as inappropriate or unprofessional behavior.

Before I joined this College faculty, I served for a few years as an appointed member of a public agency Board of Trustees. I learned a few things about board duties during those years.

I learned that it takes a while to "come up to speed" as a board member, which is why long terms of appointment are valuable. I learned that board members must trust the senior administrators of their organization to tell you the truth and to tell the truth clearly.

I also learned that it's dangerous to assume that everything you hear from employees and customers can be dismissed or ignored, and that only administrators should be trusted.

I learned that it's important to ask questions, to ask them of a variety of people, and to pay attention to the answers.

I believe that the current members of the Cincinnati State College Board of Trustees, like most past members of the Board, are good citizens who care about the College, believe in its mission, and don't want to micromanage the work of administrators, faculty, or staff—which is a good thing.

But I'd like to see more evidence that our Board members are paying attention to an appropriate variety of viewpoints. And I'd like to see them spend a lot more of their "official" time out in the sunshine.

Sick Leave Bank collects over 200 donated days

The employee Sick Leave Bank collected 207 days during the "Have a Heart, Do Your Part" campaign conducted in Winter Term.

A total of 39 faculty members donated to the Bank.

The Sick Leave Bank was established through Article X (E) (2) of the Faculty Unit 1 Contract.

Any full-time College employee who has fewer than 10 days of leave, and anticipates the need for more, may submit a request to the Human Resources Office to use time from the Sick Leave Bank.

"We're really pleased that the Sick Leave Bank has been implemented," said AAUP Chapter President Pam Ecker.

"We thank all of the faculty members who helped to get this important program started."

**Cincinnati State AAUP congratulates the 2003
 House/Bruckmann Faculty Excellence Award
 Nominees**

<p>Marc Baskind</p> <p>Crystal Bossard</p> <p>Dawn Cartwright</p> <p>Richard Daniels</p> <p>Maggie Davis</p>	<p>Mary Frey</p> <p>Carla Gesell-Streeter</p> <p>Pat Huller</p> <p>Joyce Rimlinger</p> <p>Geoff Woolf</p>
---	--

AAUP hires independent research firm to administer employee evaluation of President Wright

The Cincinnati State AAUP Executive Committee has hired RDI Marketing Services, an independent survey research firm, to distribute and report on the results of an employee evaluation of President Ron Wright.

The evaluation instrument will be the same 50-question survey that was used in 1999 and 2000, when the Cincinnati State Board of Trustees used RDI Marketing Services to collect employee input for the Board's evaluation of President Wright.

According to AAUP Chapter President Pam Ecker, the survey will be distributed to all employees within the next two weeks. RDI is expected to report on the results in early June.

Pam said the members of the AAUP Executive Committee decided to support an evaluation conducted by RDI

after Board Chairman John Steele, at the April 22 Board meeting, said that input for President Wright's evaluation which was collected by the Faculty Senate was "not credible." (See related stories on pages 1 and 2.)

Pam said, "The members of the AAUP Executive Committee believe that it is very important to address the allegations made by Mr. Steele at the April Board meeting."

"Mr. Steele said that he wanted to 'discount' the input collected by the Faculty Senate because it seemed to consist of 'cheap shots' and did not use an 'instrument that would be fair,'" Pam said.

"We don't agree with the way Mr. Steele described the open-ended feedback collected by the Senate," Pam said. "We believe the members of the Senate and

the faculty members who tried to meet the Board's short deadline for feedback acted responsibly and professionally."

"We also don't know why the Board discontinued using the 50-question survey they had used in the past," Pam said. "The opportunity to compare newly-collected data to past benchmarks seems like the kind of Quality methodology that we would expect Board members to value," Pam said.

"We're aware that the Board is likely to complete this year's assessment of President Wright before RDI issues their report," Pam said. "Nevertheless, we think it's worthwhile to collect data that can be compared to past survey results."

"We hope all employees will participate in completing and returning their surveys to RDI," Pam said.

**CINCINNATI STATE CHAPTER
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS
3520 CENTRAL PARKWAY
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45223-2690**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

PAM ECKER
PHONE: 513/569-1722

VICE PRESIDENT

JOYCE RIMLINGER

GRIEVANCE OFFICER

JOHN BATTISTONE

SECRETARY

GEOFF WOOLF

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

KEN STOLL

TREASURER

PAUL DAVIS

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

RON CRAIG

PAST PRESIDENT

BOB EVESLAGE