

AAUP NEWS



 Cincinnati State
Technical and Community College

Volume XV No. 7 March 11, 2004

Wright tells Faculty: "We have no strategic plan."

At the Faculty Forum on Wednesday, March 3, President Wright said the College does not have a strategic plan, and does not have a business plan for operating the new Advanced Technology and Learning Center (ATLC).

President Wright also said that he has "no regrets" about not raising tuition during the past few years, but he said that he will recommend to the Board of Trustees that a tuition increase must occur within the next three terms.

President Wright spoke for about an hour, primarily responding to questions asked by faculty members. About 70 faculty members and a few staff members and administrators attended the Forum.

President Wright said that the College does not have a strategic plan but that the administration is "looking at things strategically."

The President characterized the difficulties of forming strategic plans within the quickly-changing state political environment as "trying to change the tires on a NASCAR while it's on the track."

Dr. Wright said that he would be providing "information and

my best assessments" to the Board of Trustees and that the Board would then "provide direction" for the College.

President Wright also said that he would be providing to the Board information about the projected revenue and expenses related to operating the new ATLC building.

"We don't have that business plan in place right now, but we will have it soon," he said.

OBOR "ratio" questions still unresolved

President Wright briefly discussed the College's appeal pending with the Ohio Board of Regents (OBOR) to recalculate the "ratio" for Fiscal Year 2003 used by OBOR to measure the financial health of state-supported colleges and universities. (See related stories

in *AAUP News*, Feb. 9 and Feb. 27.)

President Wright described the College's approach to funding the ATLC as "investing our reserves back into the College," and he said that the College's auditors supported this approach, which resulted in a lower OBOR "ratio."

President Wright added that the College must end the Fiscal Year 2004 (ending June 30, 2004) with a balanced budget, "so we don't repeat the problem" with the OBOR calculations.

President Wright said that if the Fiscal Year 2004 ends in a deficit and the College is placed on OBOR "fiscal watch," it is possible that by January 2005 the OBOR would be "providing constant oversight" of all College operations.

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**AAUP MEETING
Open to all members of the
Faculty Bargaining Units
Thursday, March 11
11 a.m.
Conference Center Room 344**

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FY 2004 deficit to be fixed through cost-cutting measures

President Wright said that the College budget for Fiscal Year 2004 appeared to be headed toward a \$1.7 million deficit so he is "counting on cost-center managers and the Deans to make good decisions" about cost-cutting measures to be implemented for the rest of the fiscal year.

Dr. Wright said that the budget deficit was not the result of any costs associated with the ATLC construction project.

President Wright did not provide specific examples of cost-cutting measures at the Forum. He said many "changes in workflow processes" would be implemented so the College would "do what we can to lessen costs in the long run."

[On March 4 and 5, various e-mail messages to employees addressed specific cost-cutting measures such as closing the Welcome Center, discontinuing use of student and "casual pool" employees, a hiring freeze, and restrictions on spending of general operating funds.]

President Wright said at the Forum that he thought the Fiscal Year 2004 budget could be balanced without layoffs of

employees, although he later noted that personnel costs are 80 percent of the College budget.

Dr. Wright said that the College administration is examining "if we have the right number of people in the right places, and if not, how do we correct it?"

The President also said in response to a question that he "was not saying that we have too many faculty."

Dr. Wright also said that Spring Term courses would need to have the best possible "fill rates," but that some small classes might be allowed to run if students needed the classes in order to graduate on time.

Prior to Dr. Wright's arrival at the Forum, Academic Vice President Monica Posey said that the Deans were examining "activities and priorities."

Dr. Posey said that the Deans were looking at ways to reduce costs by closely examining faculty workloads, including looking closely at overload assignments for Spring, and at work compensated through the assignment of special project points.

Dr. Posey said some faculty work might be "assigned to

someone else," or put on hold until Summer Term.

Causes of deficit unclear

President Wright was asked several questions about the cause of the budget deficit. He said that in addition to changes in the amount of income received through state subsidies, other contributing factors are that "the costs of doing business are greater" and he pointed out that several other two-year colleges have support through tax levies.

Dr. Wright also said that "a sizable amount of the red ink is in Evendale" because revenues from the Workforce Development/Corporate and Community Services area have not met projections.

Faculty member John Buttlerwerth asked several questions about whether it would be possible to implement a tuition increase for Spring Term.

John said that he believed spending cuts would not be enough to balance the budget and that revenue increases were needed also.

President Wright responded, "I will carry forward the notion of increase tuition this month when I meet with the Board."

Letters



To the Editor:

During the past week there have been numerous reports in the e-mail *Daily News* of layoffs of student workers, temps, and part-time employees. There have been bulletins announcing that travel requests must be sent to the Executive Team and that no more supplies will be purchased

this year. I even hear that we have had to let the lifeguard go.

Clearly we are cutting costs, which is easy to understand (if not always easy to support) in a budget crunch.

What I cannot understand is why I have not heard anything about raising revenues. Other local colleges and universities have had substantial tuition increases in recent years and

according to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* have also experienced record-breaking growth in enrollment.

Why can't Cincinnati State raise tuition and still provide access to students? How much access will students have if there is no one here to answer their phone calls, admit them, register them, advise them, or teach them?

Kim Ziegel, Humanities

The answer is simple

--John Buttlerwerth
*Engineering Technologies
Division*

*President, Ohio Faculty
Senate of Community and
Technical Colleges*

It really is quite simple.

Keeping Cincinnati State fiscally healthy depends on two things: have the faculty teach four terms per year, and raise tuition periodically. The effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated through 35 years of fiscal solvency.

Cincinnati State faculty teach 180 days per year. None of the other 23 two-year colleges in Ohio have a comparable faculty load. Nearly all the others teach 165 days per year.

Teaching 180 days per year allows us to maintain our unique calendar and also allows the College to "ring the cash register" four times per year for each full-time faculty member's labor. This approach gives Cincinnati State a tremendous (and enviable) economic advantage over other colleges.

(Incidentally, many faculty have fought over the years to keep our calendar, and our teaching load, at 180 days. So much for the "greedy, lazy faculty" myth.)

Since 1997, Cincinnati State has raised tuition by a total of only \$2.50 per credit hour. A very modest, periodic tuition increase over those years would have avoided the financial mess we're in today.

Right now, our tuition should be in the low \$80s—or at least \$75 a credit hour. At its current level, Cincinnati State tuition may even have taken on an air of "cheapness," or of "low value."

And yes, I know all about access—maybe more than most.

As President of the statewide Ohio Faculty Senate of Community and Technical Colleges, I have the opportunity to discuss these issues frequently with members of the Ohio Board of Regents and the OBOR staff.

I don't believe a difference of \$10 per credit hour accumulated over the past 5 or 6 years would have significantly affected access to college for the majority of our students.

Financial access is a small piece of a much bigger set of issues that determine student access to higher education in Ohio.

According to OBOR research, cost usually ranks fifth or sixth in the set of reasons that students in Ohio don't attend college. Cost is behind expectations, emotional access, preparedness, personal reasons, and geographical access.

The truth is, the consequences of not raising our tuition are going to hurt our students.

Students are not being treated well when Spring Term courses that were scheduled to be taught by full-time faculty members (with experience and credentials appropriate for their assignments) are hurriedly reassigned to adjunct instructors, who are less likely to be available to assist students who need "outside of class time" help in order to succeed.

Students (and prospective students) are not being treated well when staffing in front-line offices is reduced to a "bare bones" level.

It is painfully obvious that when 80 percent of organizational expenses is in personnel costs (as President

Wright told us is the case for this College), the organization has to have modest periodic revenue increases to keep up with its expenses—even if the expenses are well controlled. Not doing so is likely to lead to a financial "train wreck."

Well, the train has wrecked.

Unless there is money hidden somewhere—or unless the Board wishes to fire employees—the Cincinnati State budget deficit for Fiscal Year 2004 cannot be balanced by cutting expenses alone. Most of the operating year is over, and there simply is not much left to cut.

When a College built on the foundation of co-op education decides it has to fire its own co-op employees in order to balance the budget, we're not cutting fat; we're not even cutting muscle—we're cutting into the bone.

The President and the Trustees have endeavored to keep tuition low for our students. This is a worthwhile and admirable goal. At \$75 per credit hour, the goal would still be met.

I urge the Board to consider raising tuition for the Spring Term and then again in the Early Fall term, to begin the road back to fiscal solvency for this College, so we can continue to serve our students and the community with excellence.

I urge the administration to delay Spring Term registration for one week, so additional steps can be taken to implement a \$5 per credit hour tuition increase for Spring Term (or whatever amount is allowable based on state tuition caps) and another \$5 per credit hour increase for the Early Fall Term.

The solution is obvious.

If we really care whether Cincinnati State stands for quality, it really is that simple.

Letters



To the Editor:

Like many of you, I have spent some restless nights in the past week, thanks to recent events at the College.

Many of us are baffled by the fact that **in spite of record enrollments, the College has a significant budget deficit.**

We were informed this week that serious cost-cutting measures are being implemented immediately. Because of these cutbacks, it appears that the students at Cincinnati State are the ones who are going to suffer.

Although President Wright said at the Faculty Forum that the College has no strategic plan, I found the document titled *Transition 2005 Strategic Plan* posted on the Cincinnati State website, and I decided to review it.

This report is full of references to quality education, such as:

- "The College's principal concern is its students."
- "The College continues its commitment to a student-

centered educational delivery system."

- "Faculty and staff [are dedicated to] academic excellence."
- "We at Cincinnati State pledge ourselves to a **QUALITY EDUCATION** experience for our students centered on teaching and learning."
- "We **FOCUS** on providing **SERVICE** that exceeds the expectations of our students, employers and the community."
- "Our continuing excellence has been the result of dedication to ensuring that students are served by highly qualified full-time faculty."

Unfortunately, it appears that now we are in a situation where the College is not going to be able to fulfill these promises.

For many years, Cincinnati State faculty have tried to participate in a meaningful way in the planning and budgeting processes of the College.

Cincinnati State faculty are an

amazing group of hard-working, educated, and dedicated professionals. The knowledge and experience of the faculty is phenomenal—yet the senior administration rarely seems interested in our input.

Even in the midst of what appears to be a genuine financial crisis, our input and concerns seem unwelcome.

Instead, the faculty have been told that we are the biggest expense at the College, and that the only possible response to our financial difficulties is to cancel more courses, run more courses with adjunct faculty, and do without even some of the most basic academic support services for the rest of the year.

But don't worry; we're told—even the athletic department is **considering** making some cuts!

There is an old adage about organizational leadership that says when an organization is successful, all members of the organization should share the credit, and when an organization is unsuccessful, the leadership should accept the blame.

Mike DeVore, Engineering Technologies Division

To the Editor:

I am sitting at my desk with a copy of our AAUP contract, and I am trying to understand what happened at the last Board meeting.

According to the *AAUP News*, seven faculty members had completed the tenure process and had been recommended for tenure by the Faculty Tenure Committee, by their Division Dean, by the Academic Vice President, and by the President.

Yet the Board tabled action on

tenure, seemingly for financial reasons.

The tenure process at Cincinnati State is not a simple "rubber stamp" of longevity, and the steps and criteria for tenure are spelled out very clearly in our contract.

Financial difficulty does not appear to be a contractual reason for denying tenure to an otherwise qualified faculty member.

Many College employees are worried about the current

financial situation. It's not clear how or why this happened, or why it became a crisis so suddenly.

The tenure candidates, and all other College employees, are entitled to fair treatment and to prompt responses to the serious questions that have been raised in the past few weeks.

I hope the next Board meeting provides answers.

Sandy Speller,
Health Technologies
Division

Letters



To the Editor:

Like any working professional, there are days that I leave work feeling happy, jubilant, fulfilled, and a multitude of other positive feelings.

Also, there are those days that I leave work feeling frustrated, confused or even angry about something that has happened on the job.

Until recently, however, I have never ended a Cincinnati State workday feeling very sad or very discouraged.

Until recently, I always believed that no matter what differences we College "stakeholders" had among ourselves, the best interests of all of the students who attend Cincinnati State would be served, and I believed that the future of our institution was secure.

I don't feel that way anymore, nor do I have confidence that there is a vision or a plan in place to lead us out of our financial difficulties.

This crisis of confidence was never more apparent to me than at the Faculty Forum on March 3, when President Wright repeatedly said to the 70 or so attendees that he has no plan to make the new building profitable, nor does he have a strategic plan for the future of Cincinnati State.

According to Dr. Wright at the Faculty Forum, these plans will be developed by the Board of Trustees.

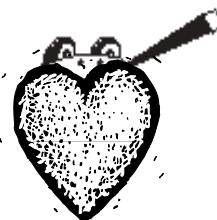
Despite this crisis of confidence, I still believe that the Greater Cincinnati community would be adversely affected if Cincinnati State does not succeed, and I believe it is the

obligation of the whole College community to come together to solve our problems.

That is why I am asking the Board of Trustees to immediately call a summit of the leadership of all of the stakeholder groups.

Our shared goal should be to discuss this crisis, and to put together a vision statement and a blueprint that will allow Cincinnati State to return to its rightful and historically-earned place as a premier Community College.

Paul Davis,
Business Technologies
Division



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our Division, the Academic Vice President, and the President of the College.

We are proud of our achievements and feel certain that our cases for tenure are strong.

The tenure process provides an opportunity for the faculty, administration, and Board to assess faculty members in terms of community involvement and academic value to the College.

It is not, however, the appropriate or the contractually correct moment for the College to effect termination of a faculty member for budgetary reasons.

Given our current fiscal situation, it is sad that the tenure class and other non-tenured faculty now have the added stress of worrying about the security of their jobs, but it's important to keep these worries in perspective.

We have made fine cases for tenure, we have a contract that speaks unequivocally to tenure, and we have the support of the one of the best organized AAUP chapters in the country.

Ronald K. Craig, Ph.D.,
Humanities Division

Geoffrey Woolf,
Humanities Division

Letters



To the Editor:

At their Feb. 24 meeting, the Cincinnati State Board of Trustees voted to table discussion of tenure for this year's group of applicants.

As members of the prospective tenure class, we would like to thank all of our colleagues for their kind concern and encouragement during this difficult and stressful time.

While the Board's decision was unexpected, and briefly worrisome, we are confident in the strength of the AAUP contract and the good faith of the Board.

Granting tenure represents an investment by the College in quality faculty who have long term commitments to the institution. We know that the Board believes in quality.

The Board's stated reason for tabling discussion of tenure was the need for more detail

concerning the College's financial situation.

This is a particularly troubling reason since tenure, as laid out in the AAUP contract, is an academic issue--not a financial one.

At the time of our hire, tenure was offered as a condition of employment provided that we "demonstrate excellence and consistent contributions to the College Community."

We, and the rest of the tenure class, worked hard during the past four years to do just that.

If the Board and administration had been uncomfortable with the financial realities of our continuing employment, they had the opportunity to not hire us.

If the Board and the administration had been dissatisfied with our performance after we were hired, they had four

opportunities (one at the beginning of each academic year) to not renew our contracts.

The AAUP contract ties the tenure process to the following set of criteria:

- evidence of appropriate credentials,
- evidence of excellence in the applicant's field of expertise,
- evidence of professional development activities, and
- recommendation by tenured faculty.

The contract also stipulates that the basis for tenure "must remain flexible to allow for individual uniqueness and creativity in performance."

The members of this year's tenure class worked diligently and in good faith for the last four years to prove our worth to the College under the stated criteria.

We submitted our applications on time. We received the recommendations of the Faculty Tenure Committee, the Dean of

see *Tenure/5*

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