



FACULTY REGENT REPORT

September 19, 2013

Dr. Patricia Minter, Faculty Regent

University Senate meeting dates summarized: June 21 and July 26, 2013

The Board of Regents met twice since our last Senate meeting, first at a called budget meeting and committee meeting on June 21, and later on July 26 for its third quarterly meeting.

SUMMARY

Issuing agency bonds and the proposed Honors College/International Student Services Building

Dissenting votes on university budget

Student Regent Cory Dodds complete summary of concerns regarding issuing bonds

Contract extension for Ray Harper, WKU Men's Basketball Coach

Discussion about the renaming of DUC

Economic strain and quality faculty—a reminder from Dr. Henry Hardin Cherry

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIONS FROM JUNE 21

Issuing agency bonds and the proposed Honors College/International Student Services Building

At the June meeting I spoke against the agenda item which authorized the issuing of agency bonds for a new Honors College/International Student Services building, as well as raising concerns about the proposal. I made three points.

It won't retain students.

It won't attract students.

We cannot afford it.

Dissenting votes on university budget

At the full board meeting which followed I voted no on the university budget for the first time ever, and was joined in dissent by Student Regent Cory Dodds so the budget was approved 8-2. We opposed it because the budget included 1.5 million dollars in annual debt service for the agency bonds next year. This represents a major departure from President Ransdell's assurances in 2011 that tuition dollars would never be used to fund capital projects. Even though there were assurances from the president and provost that any leftover monies would be used for future salary pools, I think this speaks volumes about the university's priorities. The faculty should not have to wait for leftovers.

Student Regent Cory Dodds voices concerns on bond issue

I have long been on record as opposing the Honors College/International Center Building project, but I haven't had an opportunity to fully articulate my views.

I think the biggest question being asked in the university community is: why \$22 million dollars? From my perspective, and others as well, this same project could be accomplished on a more modest budget without the financial risks. I could think of no greater honor for the Honors College than to move into the old Alumni House after its renovation. In the current economic and budget climate, this project, a glorified administrative building, is viewed as a fiscally irresponsible decision. Further, the possible use of eminent domain does nothing but diminish the university's standing in the community.

Aside from fiscal concerns, there are cultural concerns as well. In the past two to three years, a divide has been created between Honors and non-Honors students. Non-Honors students view Honors College students as the privileged members of the university. From their viewpoint, it appears as though Honors College students have unfettered access to university resources and funding.

Recruitment potential is a big selling point for this project; however, I must argue that potential Honors College students will not be convinced to attend WKU because of a new administrative building. I, like so many others, chose to attend WKU because of its academic strength and extracurricular opportunities. While the Honors College is a great complement to our current academic programs, it simply cannot replace them. A potential science or pre-med student will not be won over by the Honors College building while the Thompson Complex becomes dilapidated. International and Navitas students will dwindle when they begin to feel the financial burden this project will cause.

I encourage the committee to postpone approval of this resolution until such time that its scope is amended solely to the authorization of the remaining Downing University Center bonds.

http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/local/honors-college-grad-opposes-m-center/article_a078c8e9-c643-525a-a54d-8ea762f991a5.html

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIONS FROM JULY 26

Issuing agency bonds and the proposed Honors College/International Student Services Building

After a one-day board retreat the full board met on July 26. When the agency bond and property purchases came before the full board, they passed 8-3. The three negative votes on all three agenda items came from the three regents who represent every employee and student on this campus: my self, Staff Regent James Kennedy, and Student Regent Keyana Boka. As I said during the discussion, if this debt service draws money away from academic funding priorities such as upkeep for existing academic spaces, recruitment and retention of excellent faculty with competitive salaries and benefits, and funds we need for academic programs, it hinders all of our action plan goals.

Contract extension for Ray Harper, WKU Men's Basketball Coach

Discussion about the renaming of DUC

To briefly summarize other actions, I voted against the contract extension for Ray Harper, who is now making \$500,000 and had no competing offer on the table. There was also a spirited discussion between President Ransdell and Regent John Ridley at the board retreat concerning the name change for Downing University Center to Downing Student Union, which did not go through the board. There was also a spirited discussion between Regent Larry Zielke, President Ransdell, and myself at the full Board meeting on why the faculty handbook did not go to the Board for approval, as Regent Zielke thinks it should. I agree. Even though I disagree with some of the Board's recent decisions, it the university's governing board responsible for all fiscal decisions, programs, and policies. The buck stops there, and the board should have been involved in both decisions.

Economic strain and quality faculty—a reminder from Dr. Henry Hardin Cherry

The words of our founder Dr. Henry Hardin Cherry appear on campus stationery, t-shirts, bridges, and even buses. But as Dr. Cherry wrote in the 1932-33 annual report describing how the university would survive the Great Depression, he declared that all non-academic expenditures must temporarily cease because Western "believes that during the economic crisis it is now experiencing its success in carrying on depends largely upon the faculty it will be able to maintain. It believes that this is true not only during a period of depression but at all times. It realizes that school systems, organizations, courses of study, buildings, grounds and equipment are dead and useless things unless they are vitalized by a faculty that has vision, character, leadership and the spirit of service." Now that's something I'd like to see on the side of a bus.

CONTACT YOUR FACULTY REGENT

Please contact me with any questions, comments or concerns.

patricia.minter@wku.edu