

Faculty Regent Report to the University Senate

Dr. Patti Minter

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The Board of Regents will meet tomorrow at 9 a.m. in the Regents Room of MMTH, and will likely conclude before lunch. Tomorrow I get to vote on something very meaningful to the faculty, the approval for tenure and promotion actions for our colleagues who will become Associate Professors on July 1, and the approval of several promotions of Associate Professors to Full rank. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you in advance of tomorrow's vote on these milestones in your professional lives and in the intellectual life of this university. Well done!

At last month's Board committee meetings, we heard reports from many groups, although the enrollment report was not yet complete since our meeting was held on Census Day. Provost Emslie can fill you in on this in his report. We also heard an internal audit report from Bailey Jordan of Grant Thornton, and the report was a fairly clean bill of health for internal controls. However, their audit has determined that WKU has no formal whistleblower procedure, and that must be addressed immediately. So, a proper whistleblower procedure must be developed by May 2014 and it must protect the individual's identity beyond any question. So keep your eyes open, because faculty and staff will be contacted when this internal control is in place, and there will be a 1-800 number that goes to a third party to insure beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are compliant with federal whistleblower statutes and that identities are protected. This is a very good thing and it's being done the right way.

Moving on to the legislative report, the General Assembly has now adjourned and the news could be much worse than it is. The final cut in WKU's state funding is a 1.5% budget cut instead of a 2.5% cut. That saved WKU \$750,000. On the issue of funding state-mandated increases to KERS, the Governor's budget included 50% of the increase in our base budgets. Lawmakers agreed. This is essentially a cost avoidance issue for the comprehensive universities, which for WKU amounts to approximately \$1.3 Million that we will not have to pay. And for academics we welcome the good news that WKU will receive funding for the completion of the Science Complex as well as \$2 million dollars to fully fund the expansion of Gatton Academy by 80 students (note that the expansion of Schneider Hall to house them will be funded by a private donor). So, it could have been a lot worse, but please take every opportunity to remind our lawmakers that without significant tax reform in this state we will continue in every legislative session to face choices such as raiding higher education budgets to fund K-12 and other false either/or dichotomies that undermine the future of and quality of life in Kentucky for everyone.

On May 3, I will represent WKU AAUP at the state AAUP meeting, where I'll appear on a panel discussion about faculty leadership. I am also very eager to hear the keynote address from Joerg Tiede, editor of the 2015 AAUP Redbook (Centennial Edition) and member of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, who will speak on "Faculty Communication with Governing Boards." If you have not yet joined and are interested in doing so, please contact Dr. Eric Reed. If we have not yet convinced you how important their work is to protect academic freedom and to advocate for faculty and students, you should check out their latest report which came out in March. Its title, "Losing Focus: The Annual Report on the State of Profession, 2013-14," tells the story, and you can read it at:

<http://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/2013-14salarysurvey>

You can read more about it and its authors here:

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/04/07/faculty-salaries-are-22-report-sees-many-financial-issues-facing-professors#sthash.xamVPwlk.dpbs>

It addresses the growth of administrators, institutional priorities and spending, athletic spending and its impact on the academic mission, and their data shows clearly that the so-called advertising benefit of big-time athletics to attract students and donors is largely a myth. The report also confirms what I mentioned in last month's report—that even though expensive head coach salaries may be financed through private monies, the huge increases in assistant coach salaries are always paid from base budget, which in WKU's case means subsidized by the university budget and student fees. In their words, it is an "institutional arms race" and we are losing this one, to the detriment of not only the academic mission but also to students themselves, as their data show even greater funding disparities between student-athletes and the rest of the population than the Knight Commission report does. In short, someone is paying for the party, and it is all of us. So as we wrap up our academic year, I thank you for the great work you do and ask that as we welcome our new senators today we all commit to step up and take an active role in faculty governance, because our collective voices have never been more important than they are right now.