Chair’s Report, January 20-21, 2005

Halfway through the Academic Year is a good time for stock-taking and looking forward to completion of our busy agenda, starting with second readings of resolutions introduced at our November meeting.

On November 11 we appreciated Senator John Vasconcellos’ visit to the Senate. He made interesting comments about his legislative career and personal development, and he emphasized the need for State support for higher education that goes beyond the limits of the Compact Agreement. At the request of several senators, the ASCSU office staff has prepared a transcript of these remarks and can provide copies to all who desire them.

The Lower Division Transfer Project is now underway. The Executive Committee participated in the November 13 orientation of the discipline facilitators who will lead the faculty groups that develop the transfer packages. At the first meeting of disciplinary representatives for the LDTP (History, Criminal Justice, Chemistry, Sociology, Psychology, and Geography), two campus Articulation Officers and four Community College faculty served as consultants, along with a number of people from the Chancellor’s Office. For further information on the LDTP, see its website at http://www.calstate.edu/acadaff/ldtp.shtml.

The Academic Affairs Committee has prepared a resolution in support of a “SCIGETC” pattern that would permit postponing some lower division GE units for certain high-unit majors. This is one piece of our response to the “transfer agenda” set in motion by Title 5 changes, and SB 1785, and the recently released report from the Intersegmental Coordinating committee (ICC) of the California Education Roundtable (“Transfer: An Intersegmental analysis with Recommendations for Improvement,” July 2004).

The CAN Board has approved a new process for approving course descriptors and articulation. This was discussed at the December 7 California Intersegmental Articulation Council (CIAC) meeting and the December 9 ICAS meeting, along with the hope that CAN may serve as the common numbering system mandated by AB 1415. At the CIAC meeting I also made a presentation (with John Karras) on the LDTP.

We have also been following the new Early Assessment Program with interest and hope that it will result in better-prepared entering freshmen (for information about this see http://www.calstate.edu/eap/).

The Senate Chair reports regularly at CFA Board meetings. On December 3, budget, collective bargaining, grievances, and “rebuilding the CSU” were discussed at CFA, along with the “Working for California” report on the impact of the CSU on the State’s economy. The ASCSU Executive Committee and the CFA leadership had already been briefed on this.
report by the Chancellor on November 12. CFA has kept us well-informed about the new Unit 11, student assistants represented by the United Auto Workers.

We are looking at lecturer participation in senates and understand that there are lecturers on about 3/4 of the local senates. Our Faculty Affairs Committee has developed a resolution in support of lecturer participation in academic senates.

We continue work on resolutions on academic freedom (reaffirmation of AAUP principles 1940 and interpretative comments of 1970) and student academic freedom (call for campus policies and procedures to advance “an environment where students and faculty are free to express the widest range of viewpoints within the standards of scholarly inquiry and professional ethics”). ASCSU members met on Nov. 10 with Marcus Harvey of the AAUP’s West Coast office. (For more on the AAUP positions see www.aaup.org.) At ICAS we learned of a UC taskforce on student academic freedom. We have also learned that Senator Morrow has reintroduced legislation related to academic freedom and student rights (SB 5).

Our Academic Affairs Committee is, as in most years, exceedingly busy. In addition to transfer and advising issues, it also is looking at the planned request for authorization to offer applied doctorates, independently of the UC (starting with Audiology). The Senate’s has been concerned that adequate funding be provided for new programs. We also want to maintain and strengthening the full range of existing Masters degrees programs.

It is time for more attention to the status of graduate education in the CSU. The Senate has in the past expressed interest in the use of differential graduate fees, but we are also concerned that they may not be sufficient for graduate education; there are those who don’t want to harm the current level of support that comes from the “undergraduate program subsidy.” This year is not a propitious time for requesting greater funding for graduate education, but the Academic Council of the University of California is interested in our joining with them in support of a resolution in the current legislative session that at least affirms the importance of post-graduate programs in California public higher education.

We are working on some other initiatives, including a focus on improving advising. We have received a number of recommendations about this, including the allocation (or reallocation) of assigned time for advising. There will be workload and funding issues to address if, as suggested, more faculty time is to be spent advising students. Advising will be a major focus of our attention for the rest of the year, beginning with a panel discussion at next week’s Board of Trustees meeting. A resolution on advising from the Academic Affairs Committee is expected later in the spring.

Advising is a special concern of students. The Executive Committee met with the CSSA leadership on November 16, and I attended the CSSA meeting on the Monterey Bay campus on December 11, to report on the senate agenda and to discuss advising issues.

Enhancing faculty professional development is now a special focus of the reactivated Academic Technology Advisory Committee. We expect to discuss this at the ITL Board meeting at the end of January as well. The ATAC agenda has been embraced by the PTSC and reported to the Academic Council.
As I reported in November, I sent the Trustees our report on “The CSU at the Beginning of the 21st Century” (to be found with our other reports at http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Reports/index.shtml) along with an update on widening of the faculty compensation gap and increase in both the faculty work week and the student-faculty ratio. Trustee O’Connell wrote back thanking us for the information.

On my campus visits I often hear complaints from faculty about the budget situation and that money is being spent on technology (including the Common Management System) instead of workload alleviation or the funding of ACR73. There is growing concern that increasing the SFR by the use of technology – e.g. distance education for “foundational” courses – could undermine the faculty-student contact that is so important for student retention and student success.

We will be interested in whatever recommendations of the CPR (California Performance Review) are proposed as legislation. The Academic Affairs Committee has prepared a resolution (AS 3677-AA) reiterating the senate’s position that participation in community service and service learning should be voluntary.

Our Faculty Trustee Recommending Committee has now screened nominations that were submitted by the campuses. We are gratified that there has been considerable interest in this post. The nominees’ materials are available in the Senate office for examination by senators, who in March will determine which names are to be forwarded to the Governor.

Faculty knowledge about and interest in shared governance are frequently raised in our discussions. It has been suggested that we produce a brochure – perhaps an electronic version – on shared governance: what it is, and why it’s important for the university and for faculty who make a lifetime career in the university.

On November 22 I attended the Academic Council of the University of California Academic Senate; it was most interesting, and UC Senate Chair Blumenthal will attend our plenary in March. We value our intersegmental relationships; Kate Clark, Chair of the California Community Colleges’ Academic Senate, will attend our plenary session tomorrow at our invitation.

The Executive Committee and I continue to be informed and provide advice about the agenda of other groups. Most recent meetings have been with the local campus chairs (Dec. 2), the CSU Board of Trustees (Nov. 16/17), the CSU VPAAs/Provosts (Academic Council, Dec. 2), and the Board of CFA (Dec. 3). We also attend meetings of the California State Student Association (CSSA), the Alumni Council, the Intersegmental Coordinating Committee of the California Education Roundtable, and ICAS.

I visited the San Bernardino campus and senate with Faculty Trustee Kaiser on November 30, the Stanislaus campus on December 9, and the Sacramento State senate executive committee on December 10. Visits to the San Marcos and Sonoma campuses are pending.

I’d like to close by welcoming all senators and faculty back after what I hope was an enjoyable holiday season.