Chair’s Report, May 5-6, 2005

This is my final report for the academic year, although for the next twelve months I’ll be engaged, in the role of past chair, with ongoing projects. I would like to thank all the senators for your hard work and patience. I have been particularly impressed – delighted even – with the quality and intensity of your work as a deliberative body. We can be very proud of what we do for the California State University faculty and the students and citizenry we serve. I join my colleagues in their commendation of those leaving the Senate, and in greeting their replacements, including, I am pleased to report, Prof. Emeritus Harold Goldwhite as the retiree member. On another personal note, I want to thank, warmly, this year’s Executive Committee members for their support and hard work.

When this academic year began we knew that a great deal would be expected of CSU faculty and the senate, and that has indeed proved to be the case. We have had to deal not only with flat salaries, a rising student-faculty ratio, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining faculty, but the implementation of SB 1785 and SB 1415 has called for extraordinary efforts on our part in establishing the Lower Division Transfer Project (LDTP). Our intersegmental relationships have been further strained by the CSU’s request for authorization to offer applied doctorates independently. We have, once again, had to deal with threats to academic freedom posed by legislative proposals for a so-called “academic bill of rights.” The Executive Committee and I have reported in greater detail about these matters in the Senate newsletter (you will find the latest edition of this at http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Newsletter/2005/tasn_0405.pdf).

I must add that it has been particularly challenging to have had to explain to our Community College colleagues in several venues why the CSU had to abandon the CAN process. The short explanation is that Senate Bills 1415 and 1785 established time deadlines for changes to our transfer processes, and we realized that CAN would not be adequate to the tasks of completing the course descriptions for the LDTP and developing a fuller numbering system for courses used in transfer, not to mention the further tasks of reviewing course submissions and then reviewing and revising courses and transfer patterns periodically. Furthermore, we sensed a lack of adequate intersegmental cooperation with CAN; therefore, we formed LDTP disciplinary groups to establish course patterns for priority transfer status and to write descriptors of statewide pre-major courses. With the loss of CAN, a new arrangement about the involvement of the Community Colleges with the LDTP and a new course numbering system is emerging, and an MOU is being worked out that explains how some CAN descriptors will be used or modified for LDTP use. The ASSIST system should continue to serve as the official repository of articulated courses, and the OSCAR system of electronic submission of course outlines for LDTP, IGETC, and “Code” course approval. We are providing advice about the wording of this MOU, mindful that CSU faculty are called upon to do a great deal of the work in setting up and maintaining the LDTP.
Much of my report has to mention loose ends. The LDTP is a huge, complex ongoing project, with 33 majors begun this year and more scheduled for next year. Discipline faculty will complete the course patterns and descriptors (or templates). Then faculty will need to review and recommend articulation of community college courses to the templates. In the future there will be a need for review and revision of course patterns and descriptors. There will also have to be agreement about who “owns” course descriptors: the departments where the courses are taught, or the majors who require use of these courses. The Senate will have to continue providing oversight for the LDTP project.

I will continue working with you for the strengthening of graduate education in the CSU, which at present means promoting SB 724 as well as the goals outlined in the draft ACR we submitted with the UC Senate. We will almost certainly have to revisit the “academic bill of rights,” about which I am particularly concerned. We need to provide our best advice to the campuses as they study problems associated with student success and work to facilitate graduation and deal with the actions recommended by the Senate and/or the Trustees. I trust that student success and the enhancement of learning will also be the ongoing focus for faculty development and academic technology initiatives that we will see in the near future.

Over the past year I have learned much about the diversity of our campuses and the importance of the saying that one size does not fit all. If this applies to systemwide policy applied over 23 campuses, it is just as true of our faculty and students. Faculty are engaged in governance, teaching, and other professional activity in varying degrees, and our compensation and RTP practices must recognize faculty commitment and excellence in whatever areas it is found. Our students are likewise diverse in their educational needs and abilities, and we owe it to them to offer the greatest possible variety of maps that lead to their goals.

Our challenge is to maintain the quality of our work as educators while improving the pathways to student success. This is not easily accomplished in a climate of “culture wars” and political attacks on the university and faculty. We cannot provide meaningful access to good educational experiences without adequate support for the work we do. We are going to have to bring to this message more voices with more urgency to more constituencies if we are to fulfill the promise of the excellent university we are all committed to.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve this year, and for all your fine work in support of the Senate’s mission.