

ASCSU Chair's Board of Trustees Meeting Report

Steven Filling
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Good morning all. I am mindful of the first semester I taught at California State University 22 years ago. I was tasked with teaching intermediate accounting on Friday nights from eight to ten. I feel a similar harmonic with the audience right now - I'm a major impediment to you proceeding to lunch. Please bear with me.

One of the things that the Chancellor noted in his address was his sense we're in need of a shared commitment, a shared commitment to the citizens and students of California. I think one reflection of that commitment was enunciated by Trustee Taylor yesterday when he asserted that, and pardon if I misquote slightly, he's willing to die in support of teaching as the primary responsibility of the CSU. That's a commitment that is shared by the faculty of the CSU that is shared by the staff of the CSU and most assuredly shared by our students.

Another point from Trustee Taylor is the notion that we should be moving money into the classroom. We appreciate the thoughts that, using my business background speak, we put more money into the production function of the CSU. It just makes sense and perhaps the sustainable financial model report will provide guidance how to do that.

One statement the academic senate made last week speaks to that issue. It was a request that we find ways to recognize that California taxpayers are indeed contributors to the CSU. As I walk across the campuses I see buildings named for a wide variety of people. I haven't come across one named Taxpayers of California yet but one of the mechanisms we might use to further state support for our institution is to further the recognition of the value that those tax payers dollars provide. In PBS speak, "funded by viewers like you."

Another statement of the academic senate last week spoke to the role of CSU campus faculty in defining requirements concerning transfer credit for courses taken at other institutions. This speaks to something I think near and dear to the faculty of the CSU - the reality that the 23 campuses are distinct entities.

Trustee Monville noted yesterday that maybe it would be good if algebra at Stanislaus was the same algebra at San Louis Obispo. It is. The content of algebra courses at the two institutions is virtually identical. What is different is the presentation, the way in which we reach out to the students we deal with, and that has been and continues to be one of the core strengths

of the CSU. As President Zing noted earlier, we take our students where they are and try to empower their change. Empowerment mechanisms change but the goal remains the same.

Another one of our statements dealt with a reality of today's CSU. We have a lot of non-tenure track, what we refer to as temporary, faculty in the CSU. We are asking our campuses and our central office to please ensure those faculty are included in the orientation programs that we offer our faculty. We do so in pursuit of ensuring the quality of the education we provide for our students.

In line with that, Chancellor White also remarked yesterday that it is indeed the faculty closest to the students. I think he's correct and if you look at the California State University public relations website this morning you will find a new posting to their blog. It's a story about one of my colleagues at Stanislaus. Dr. Christy Gonzales, the story of how she, as a first generation student didn't know she could be succeed at college and went through the process with a faculty mentor, and in turn, became a faculty member and director of the faculty mentor program and guided countless students through the same process.

It is indeed the faculty that are closest to our students. It is those relationships that we need to nurture. In pursuit of that the Academic Senate is asking the Chancellor to convene a tripartite task force to develop an action plan to deal with the issue of tenure density. We have noted in the past that we all agree it's a problem and I am glad there is consensus. I think perhaps it's time that we do something about the problem. As an example of what Chancellor White noted yesterday we hired 742 new tenure track faculty last year. I am very happy about that, but I note also maybe it's not such good news that 500 of the new faculty were replacing faculty that left last year. That is, if we choose to make a dent in the tenure density problem we need to develop a plan and act upon it. As an example of the scope of the problem, Tim also noted we are at an all-time high for faculty. That's true. However, we have about 100 fewer tenure track faculty than we did in 2005. We have several thousand more part time temporary faculty and those are not the people that can develop long-term relationships and transform students' lives. That is, they're not people that can do what we need them to do, unless we enable them to be long-term employees of the university.

Trustee Fortune you mentioned earlier today it would be good for higher education to engage in conversations with k-12 about what it is that we think that students should have as they enter the CSU. I am happy to note that one of the statements the Academic Senate made last week was an acceptance of the Intersegmental Council of the Academic Senates of CSU, CCC and UC statement delineating what it is that we think incoming students should have in terms of natural science preparation. It is available via a web link which is in the materials in your packets. It's a statement we talked with K-12 folks about quite a bit and we hope it helps them understand where we need our students to be entrance that so we can take them further.

I will note relatedly Trustee Stepanek mentioned earlier today a push for four years of math in high school. We concur in the need for that and would offer the additional thought that one of the classes needs to be in the senior year.

Finally, we requested that the Chancellor's office return the research, scholarly and creative activity fund to status as a line item in the budget. When the crisis hit that was removed from the baseline budget. The Chancellor has graciously provided funding every year, however we would like RSCA acknowledged as a regular part of the budget for the campuses so they can plan effectively.

Returning to the tenure density issue I would like to share with you Assembly Speaker Atkins' statement on Chancellor White's address yesterday. "Chancellor White's State of the CSU address reminds us the success is linked to the success of the university and its students. I applaud him for the leadership and working to improve outcomes for students especially those from underserved communities. It's important that CSU recognize that the improved outcomes will only come about if the university makes the kind of real commitment it takes to recruit and retain a strong faculty".

Chair Monville that concludes my report. Thank you.