

ASCSU Chair's Board of Trustees Meeting Report

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I'll begin by thanking Chancellor White and EVC Blanchard for their support of research in the CSU and their willingness to act on the Senate's request that they return research funding to baseline status as a recurring part of the Academic Affairs Budget. This enables campuses to plan intelligently for at least minimal support of faculty research projects.

Thank you also to Trustee Eisen, who made time to visit our plenary last week. Trustee Eisen, your willingness to seek out faculty for information and conversation was and is much appreciated. We appreciated your sharing bird stories as well.

Academic Senate Actions

AS-3236 is Reaffirming the Principle of Shared Governance Within the California State University:

This resolution reaffirms the principle of shared governance in HEERA, and requests that the Chancellor articulate in the written response to this resolution how “shared leadership” – to which he frequently refers - conforms with or differs from HEERA and the “long accepted manner” of shared governance as defined by the AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.

Chancellor White's response to faculty at San Bernardino, one of the campuses where faculty have called on the Chancellor to intervene, provides a good example of the issues we seek clarity on. He writes, in part, “Shared governance – shared leadership as I prefer to imagine the construct – does not mean shared decision-making.” HEERA, the legislation addressing governance of the CSU, states, “The Legislature recognizes that joint decision-making and consultation between administration and faculty or academic employees is the long accepted manner of governing institutions of higher learning and is essential to the performance of the educational mission of these institutions.” In pursuit of having the best possible working relationship we need to develop shared understandings of how we go about doing the business of the CSU, or at the very least an understanding of where we differ.

The Senate also expresses concern that when campus faculty leaders have called upon the Chancellor to intervene when documented serious violations of shared governance have occurred, the Chancellor's responses at times reference "shared leadership" yet fail to offer solutions that are responsive to the requests. As I mentioned, one of the campuses requesting assistance was San Bernardino.

San Bernardino faculty released the first of two reports on a comprehensive survey of campus climate this week, and in the words of one faculty member, "While I haven't fully absorbed this report yet, after reading it a couple of times, I just feel so very sad. There are no other words, just overwhelming sadness. I guess I hoped somehow that things weren't as bad as we all thought. Reading this, I feel like they are worse".

I have copies of the Executive Summary from that report for your perusal. You'll note that the report concludes, not with expressions of no confidence or calls for resignation, but rather with a request that we first acknowledge the serious nature of the problems, and then work collaboratively to solve those problems and restore the CSU SB community. I hope that Chancellor White and our colleagues in the CO will be amenable to providing the leadership and guidance requisite to that project.

AS-3244 expresses Academic Senate Support for Requiring a Fourth Year of High School Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning as a Requirement for Admission to the California State University:

The CSU currently requires 3 years of high school math for admission. This resolution is a call for the CSU to require a fourth year. As conceptualized for the purposes of the admission requirement, mathematics is envisioned within a broad framework that could include classical mathematics, statistics, financial literacy and other variants of quantitative reasoning. The resolution also recommends that a mathematics course be completed as part of the final year of high school. Research tells us that it is important for students to have continued work in mathematics rather than completing requirements and then taking a year or two off.

The resolution further recommends that the CSU investigate the impact these requirements may have on the success of all students, particularly those from historically underserved populations. We want very much to honor our shared commitment to closing the achievement gap and are mindful that this recommendation may impact our work there. We are also mindful that we close the gap without disenfranchising students.

In addition, we recommend that the CSU continue to engage K-12 and intersegmental constituencies regarding the impact these requirements may have on resources. I know the Lieutenant Governor will be pleased that this resolution could increase the likelihood that a computer science course could count as a 4th year of mathematics course.

AS-3245 speaks to Selection of Faculty to Serve on Campus Honorary Degree Committees

At the November 2015 meeting, the Board approved an Honorary Degree Policy that, among other things, specifies the process for the selection of faculty representatives on campus honorary degree committees. This resolution asserts that faculty representatives serving on campus honorary degree committees should be selected by faculty. For the Senate this is a basic issue of representation.

AS-3246 addresses Workplace Bullying Within the CSU Community

This resolution reaffirms the ASCSU's commitment to the "states of mind" that "differing perspectives be tolerated and respected" and that all members of the university community treat one another with respect and honesty.

I know that you have heard, today and over the past year, from a variety of faculty and staff from various campuses that workplace bullying is a serious and continuing issue. The Senate's statement commends the Chancellor's Office and campuses that have addressed the intimidation, humiliation and isolation that workplace bullying creates. Those campuses include Channel Islands, East Bay, Fullerton, San Francisco State and others. We urge campuses that have not done so to develop and implement strategies to redress, remedy and mediate workplace bullying and promote inclusive environments throughout the CSU.

AS-3248 presents the Legislative Advocacy Positions of the Academic Senate of the California State University:

This resolution formally adopts positions on bills currently under consideration in the California State Legislature. We believe that there is evidence that having the Senate speak formally in addition to the CSU itself allows more impact on legislation.

Naturally we, as the Trustees and all members of the CSU Community, are encouraging the Legislature and the Governor to adequately fund the CSU. As other speakers have pointed out, it was the joint efforts of the California Faculty Association, the California Teachers Association, the California State Students Association and a universe of other alphabet soup organizations that resulted in CSU receiving the extra \$100 Million requested in the Board budget. I'll reiterate the comments of immediate past Assembly Speaker Atkins:

"CSU built up a lot of goodwill in the Legislature this year, and my colleagues and I appreciated the University's approach of no tuition-increase threats, their relative restraint on executive compensation, and their working collaboratively with students, faculty, staff, and alumni to make CSU's case. Those actions, and CSU's commitment to prioritizing the enrollment of more California students and improving graduation rates, helped secure more money from the state.

Stonewalling on needed and deserved salary increases for faculty will chip away at legislators' confidence in the system, and maintaining that confidence is imperative as we fight to bring additional funding to CSU.”

Clearly, as we already know, our advocacy works most effectively when we work together.

AS-3249 enunciates Concerns about Administrative Communications regarding Classroom Discussion of Possible Strike Action

This resolution expresses consternation over recent communications from some CSU presidents and administrators forbidding faculty to discuss in their classrooms the potential strike action planned by the California Faculty Association. Yesterday Vice Chancellor Lamb reiterated the basic content of that message. Her statements framed the matter as an issue of “appropriate use of state resources”. Much as I and the Senate respect VC Lamb's role in the CSU, we don't believe she, or the campus presidents, are qualified to make informed decisions about the appropriateness or lack thereof of classroom discussion topics. The Senate's statement affirms that the determination of the relevance of particular material to a class is the decision of the faculty teaching that class in the context of accepted pedagogical and disciplinary standards.

Part of our consternation arises from the fact that each of the campuses has policy concerning professional ethics and instruction. From my own campus, Stanislaus: “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.”

Clearly this issue is addressed by extant policies. The Academic Senate shares CFA's concern about the chilling effect statements such as those sent out by presidents at some of the campuses have on academic freedom and effective instruction. We believe those communications unnecessarily enflame an already tense situation.

Now on to our continuing work:

First, we are proposing that campuses develop a database about students and faculty involved in online courses for comparison with similar information about the general population of students, faculty and courses. We also suggest that the data be aggregated across campuses to enable data driven decisions regarding the efficacy and cost effectiveness of online teaching in the CSU.

As we're all aware, online instruction is often held out as a means of massively expanding access to public higher education without incurring additional cost. We believe that online education works for some classes, for some students, in some situations, and are hoping that providing a strong base of evidence concerning online instruction will enable us to make the best decisions possible as to when, where and how to offer online courses that carry forward our commitment to quality education for California's students.

Second, I mentioned earlier our gratitude for Chancellor White's agreement to return RSCA funding to the baseline budget. We're now developing a request that the Chancellor's Office increase funding for the RSCA program to a level commensurate with the original intent of the program and the reality that temporary, as well as tenure-track faculty, are now eligible to receive RSCA funding.

And finally, the Senate has a continuing focus on ensuring that we provide a safe and effective learning environment for our students. We have urged our administrative colleagues to remedy the serious lack of psychological counseling services on the campuses. I was cheered yesterday by VC Lamb's reference to concern that our students have access to mental health services during any labor actions. I share that concern, although I offer the suggestion that it's not just during labor actions that our students need access to services. On the Stanislaus campus staffing for psychological counseling has fallen so low that we now have a program, "call a counselor," where students in need of services are connected by phone with a community mental health professional. This program flies in the face of best practices, indeed it may well not even provide effective triage. It is well established in the research literature that effective mental health counseling requires continuing trust relationships between client and counselor, hardly something facilitated by a one-off phone call. We can and should do better, and I'm hopeful that Lori's comments yesterday signify a shared commitment to find a way to improve things.

Chair Monville that concludes my report. Thank you.