Minutes of the UNLV Faculty Senate – August 18, 2015 (Retreat)


Absent: Matt Pedersen, Wendy Hoskins

The 2015 UNLV Faculty Senate Retreat was called to order @ 9:02 a.m. by Chair Bryan Spangelo. Welcome included introducing the Executive Committee, acknowledging the resignation of Chair John Filler on July 10 and calling for nominations to fill the now vacant Vice Chair position. Chair Spangelo then proceeded with opening remarks about relationships and group dynamics within the University. He likened the misbeliefs and misconceptions between Administration and Faculty to various Looney Tunes characters and scenarios, ending with a pledge to work toward better understanding and collaboration.

Invited speaker, Chancellor Dan Klaich, gave an overview of what he characterized as a “remarkable” Legislative session. UNLV’s Law School and Medical School received support. He believes that Governor Sandoval, in choosing not to run for US Senate and committing to support education, offers a generational opportunity to NSHE. Legislators are finally coming to appreciate the importance of salary and benefits in the quality of education. The Chancellor praised the engagement of this Board of Regents, noting that they will be expecting good stewardship of the unprecedented funding awarded by the legislature. Budget discussions begin now and UNLV must put forth budget priorities for achieving Top Tier status. Senator Bien asked about PEBP. The Chancellor agreed that it is still a big problem and praised Gerry Bomotti’s efforts on behalf of NSHE. Past Chair Montgomery noted that fair assessment and fair reward of faculty, based not just on student evaluations, is essential to goals of retention and progression. The Chancellor agreed that Merit is important. Dean Yucha expressed frustration about trying to get faculty involved in developing standards of evaluation. Provost Rapaport stated that this is a priority for the Provost’s Office.

Invited speaker, President Len Jessup, offered a summary of his first seven months in office. The first five months were consumed by the legislative session. But the result of that was an additional sixty million plus in funding for UNLV. He is impressed by the Governor’s commitment to higher education. Additionally, the President is working with constituent groups in pursuing external resources. 2014-2015 was the second best year ever in fundraising: $95 million in gifts or pledges. $75 million was new contributions, $20 million in cash. Strategic planning has identified five pathway goals to achieving Top Tier status. The Administration is working to improve business processes within the University. Senator Robinson commented that initiatives cannot always be top down. The President agreed, recognizing the Senate’s importance in developing university policy. Senator Opfer questioned the University’s financing
ability, in particular for new construction and large capitol improvement. President Jessup acknowledged that each project involves its own unique financing. He explained that UNLV is nowhere near the limit to our debt capacity. UNR has much more debt and leveraging of student fees. Bonding is for the entire NSHE system and he believes that needs to be changed. Senator Jakubowski asked how the arts would participate in Tier One? The President is meeting with each Dean, looking at the Colleges’ books, trying to understand each College’s needs and how to help them. He is also seeking proposals from Deans that enhance the university/community relationship.

Invited speaker, Provost Nancy Rapaport, likened herself to Gossamer, an obscure Looney Tunes character, as she praised Chair Spangelo’s opening remarks. She stated relations between the Senate and the Provost have been direct and civil but did acknowledge that her office stumbled in rolling out reorganization without discussion. She spoke of the Top Tier retreat which occurred on Monday, August 10, with the Senate represented by members of the Executive Committee. She and Chair Spangelo are co-chairing the Infrastructure & Shared Governance Committee of the Top Tier effort. They are seeking input and particularly, she is asking for faculty participation in examining UNLV Centers and Institutes. Provost Rapaport considers the Provost Office to be a service arm: it is there to assist faculty, support University goals, and also answer to the Board of Regents. The Provost Office will “own” its policies, she stated, also noting that she appreciates blunt but civil. She quoted General George S. Patton: “Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” Senator Bien complained about the labyrinthine processes of bringing guests to campus. Senator Robinson stated that Deans need to answer for their actions and that these actions cannot be out of alignment with department, college, University or NSHE polices. Provost Rapaport agreed and asked for the Faculty Senate’s assistance.

Past Chair Montgomery offered a summary of the accomplishments of the 2014-2015 Faculty Senate. Clarification of UNLV Bylaw Chapter 1, Section 2.2 was passed and went forward to be signed by the President and the Chancellor. Bylaw changes regarding recruitment of faculty, personnel recommendations and workload are in process. She praised the Senate’s involvement in the legislative decision to rescind furloughs without pay. She also lauded the efforts of Senator Unger as an advocate with PEBP. The Faculty Senate was granted a new administrative position in the Faculty Senate office. Efforts begun in 14-15 will continue into the 15-16 session.

Senator Unger, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on PEBP, announced that a point person for appeals has been appointed for Southern Nevada: Lou DeRosa. He also noted that deductibles for the “Consumer Driven” plan have been slightly reduced and rates that were supposed to go up went back down. There is still a drive for separation from PEBP but is not likely. Ironically, despite the expense and inadequacy of the plan, it may be considered a “Cadillac plan” under the Affordable Care Act and taxed as such, adding insult to injury.

Senate then broke for 15 minutes before returning to a planning session to determine the Senate’s agenda for the 2015-2016 year. This session was run by Secretary Shannon Sumpter. Resulting "To Do" is attached.

Chair Spangelo offered closing remarks, thanking all for their participation and reminding Senators to nominate or self-nominate candidates for Vice Chair. Next meeting will be September 15 @ 12:15 PM in SU 208 A/B.