

Faculty Assembly

March 20, 2012

Library Conference Room

Ralph Olliges, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order.

Announcements

1) All present were reminded that the Spring Faculty Institute is this Friday, March 23, 2012 beginning at 2:30 p.m. in the Sunnen Lounge.

Ralph welcomed President Stroble and Provost Schuster.

President Stroble thanked the faculty for the opportunity to provide context regarding things taking place on campus (i.e., Master Planning). She began by telling the group that Webster University's latest comprehensive campaign closed successfully and is providing 45 new endowed scholarships, over 100 annual Webster scholarships, and showed increased giving by faculty and staff.

President Stroble confirmed that substantial funding is "in the bank" for the new landmark Interdisciplinary Science Building as well as for other improvements all over campus due to the generosity of donors who have donated \$56.5 million in external funds. She stated that due to the funding success, funds have been reinvested into Webster University's faculty and staff by adding sixteen (16) new full-time faculty positions as well as new staff positions.

Provost Schuster addressed the assembly next. He commended those working on the Global Citizenship Program and stated that the committee is diligently working on creating courses and advising students to fill those courses that will open in Fall 2012.

Regarding the Mercer Study, Provost Schuster stated that we need to work hand in hand together for the betterment of the University and aligning our activities with that mission. Cooperation is needed from everyone in fine tuning the existing Mission. Provost Schuster also stated that this academic year, a study will assess adjunct faculty use across programs and majors and compare the total remuneration that adjunct faculty receive.

Provost Schuster also reiterated President Stroble's comments regarding the new landmark Interdisciplinary Science Building. It is felt that the new building is the right thing for Webster University to do and it will allow us to better serve our students.

The floor was then opened to faculty to ask questions as listed below:

Q: Is a fitness center in Webster University's Master Plan?

A: Plans are underway to improve the student life experience campus-wide with expanded on-campus residential facilities, a new recreation center to better meet athletics and recreation needs, an expanded dining facility and a centrally located student center.

Q: Are there plans to improve the internet and WIFI access for students?

A: Provost Schuster - information technology does need to be addressed and will take place step by step. Broadband will be at its best in the new academic building, and each new building, to enhance our technology and communication. The first step is to find the manpower to serve faculty, staff and students in information technology as there are only two (2) people supporting 100 sites and all of the work that involves.

Q: There is concern with the Master Plan and the suggested demolition of the Pearson House. A petition has been circulated for signatures to stop that plan. Faculty support the Master Plan and are not anti-change, but hate to see the Pearson House destroyed. Is there something in the works to save the Pearson House from demolition?

A: Provost Schuster replied that the demolition of the Pearson House was only one suggestion and is not a done deal. He stated that it is extremely important that the voices be heard and we work together to find a solution to fit the needs of those concerned regarding the Pearson House. President Stroble stated that in going forward in the shape, design, function, and location of new buildings for what is needed in a learning environment, we have to work together to find a solution. She also stated that there is something important in the character of the Pearson and Priest Houses and there is no reason we cannot preserve that character in a new building's design.

Q: Everything is transforming/changing in regard to today's technology. What is Webster University's commitment to online teaching/programs/learning?

A: Provost Schuster - Webster University is already an undisputed leader in online non-profit institutions in the United States by the number of students we serve and resources we provide. In order to continue being a leader, we will invest in lecture/capture technology, video conferencing facility for seamless connection to all our extended campuses, and development of knowledge in the community to make it known to the world that Webster University is a leader with our online presence.

Q: In regards to growth, what is the optimum size Webster University should strive for?

A: President Stroble - the 5,000 mark is in the future and we must plan for that, but there are limits with the physical capacity and who knows what education will look like in 50 years as we are in a changing time. Provost Schuster stated that we should not grow just for the sake of growing. The feel of an educational institution is not only to provide opportunity to both traditional students and working adults, but we need to further advance the traditional student as well. By reaching out to those young minds and sending them all over the world, the university will be enhanced with the changing times.

Q: Would a cap be placed on graduate enrollment?

A: In certain markets, we do show a steep drop for three years in enrollment in the part-time undergraduate population. This year we completely stopped the decline. The balance between undergraduate and graduate students will be decided both by the academic decision making unit as well as other vital parts of the University, but in all aspects to make Webster a sustainable and high quality institution.

Q: Joe Schuster received congratulations on getting his book on baseball published. When Joe came here 20 years ago, Webster University tended to be an afterthought. In some places we compete with UMSL and Washington University and we have done this by staying true to our students across all disciplines. With talk of expansion and increasing enrollment, reassurance is needed that we will continue that relationship with students as they matter to us as individual people. Will this principal be carried into the future as well?

A: Provost Schuster responded that cursory analysis last year showed that Webster's base class size is 7 - 12 students and is as intimate as it can be. He has suggested doubling class size to save money, but nothing will be done to change the current chemistry of small class size that is part of Webster's history.

Q: What is the status of the gender equity study? We, as a faculty, suggested to the Faculty Senate that this issue be researched. Ralph Olliges sent an e-mail to Julian with the motion that the faculty made.

A: Provost Schuster stated that in order to move ahead, the root of the problem needs to be addressed. A common understanding needs to be gained of what gender, or any equity is, and what the ultimate objective should address. President Stroble stated that she is waiting for a group study report and then this issue will move forward. No resources will be spared to fix the gender equity problem.

Q: With regard to adjunct faculty, is research being conducted that would allow them to have more participation in things on campus (i.e., grants, compensation, etc.)?

A: President Stroble stated that they are reaching out to other institutions to gather information on the on-going piece of work about compensation, but more than that as well. Ralph Olliges reported that the Faculty Senate assigned a taskforce to look into issues that affect adjunct faculty. That taskforce consists of Michael Hulsizer, Art Silverblatt, and David Hildtich. Any feedback should be directed to the members of that taskforce so that they can incorporate that information into their study.

Q: With regard to the European campuses, what governing body for accreditation is setting the definition of criteria used in their environment? Are we using what is in place on the Webster home campus? Can that information be sent to the administrators in Europe?

A: Provost Schuster responded that if we talk about what is guiding those institutions, there are vast problems with this particular issue there. Our requirements and local accreditation agents are close. Without knowing a concrete incident, he cannot answer that question properly. Webster attempts to make the process as uniform as possible so that any person, no matter where they work, would have a same similar set of requirements and that each issue needs to be addressed as it arises.

Q: Do you foresee increased diversity among faculty?

A: President Stroble – absolutely. Global diversity is a core value for the University, and we will educate a diverse student body effectively if we reflect diversity ourselves. We need to learn more about how to do that well to diversify recruiting pools.

Ralph Olliges reminded all present to go to the Master Plan on Webster University's website and provide feedback.

The Faculty Assembly adjourned at 4:02 p.m.