HIGHLIGHTS FROM FACULTY SENATE MEETING
February 7, 1996

President's Report

Update on Higher Education Transition Team activities
  ▶ General agreement on constitutional protection for higher education
  ▶ Also agreement on making deferred maintenance top priority
  ▶ Some resistance to a single board to govern higher education

Issue of equity and counter-offer raises recently covered by Reveille. Provost Jenkins to discuss this issue today

ASH committee and Office of Academic Affairs working on withdrawal policy

Nominating committee appointed to recommend slate of officers for next year

“Commitment to Community” statement formally presented to the Chancellor

Faculty Senate Executive Committee has received several policy statements for review and comment

Invited Guest—Provost William Jenkins

Addressed the issue of equity and counter-offer raise:
Presented the second of his reflections papers

Old Business

Report from ad hoc committee on writing across the curriculum (Resolution 95-05)
President Strain reported on ad hoc committee on program review

New Business

Introduction of resolution supporting Governor Foster’s reorganization plans for higher education (95-05)
Report from John Collier on plans to explore the possibility of a parking garage on campus

MINUTES
Faculty Senate Meeting
February 7, 1996

The meeting was called to order by President Strain at 3:05 pm. Proxies were announced. Guests present included Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost William Jenkins; Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dan Fogel, Daniel Marin (Business Adm.), Malcolm Richardson (English), Ravi P. Rau (Physics), Jayme Marler (LSU Today), and Mary Boudreaux (Staff Senate). The January minutes were moved and approved.

President's Report:

President Strain began giving an update on the Higher Education Transition Team’s activities, stating that weekly meetings continue in an attempt to address the agenda of issues Governor Foster has assigned them. Of the three major things which the Transition Team is looking at, there seems to be no opposition to (1) the idea of constitutionally protecting higher education funding or (2) making deferred maintenance and repair of university buildings the top priority in the capital outlay bill. However, the third part of the proposal, the reorganization of higher education governance, has met with some resistance. Governor Foster has linked all three items to be submitted to the special session of the Legislature in March as a package deal - all or none. The current reorganization version being considered is a single board known as the Board of Governors, which will consist of two people appointed from each congressional district and seven appointed at-large from within or outside the state, with a limit of no more than four from any one congressional district and a student member. President Strain also mentioned that he has
President Strain noted that most of the opposition to this proposed plan has come from the existing management boards and some of the campus and system CEO's. The chairman of the Higher Education Transition Team, Jim Coleman, contacted President Strain asking for expressions of support, in principle, for the three prongs of Governor Foster's proposal for higher education. After consulting with the Faculty Senate executive Committee (FSEC), Strain wrote a letter of support from the Executive Committee representing the Senate. Members of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates (ALFS) were also contacted and asked to provide supporting letters. President Strain sent a letter of endorsement from ALFS. The Governor's Chief of Staff, Steve Perry, informed the CEO's Monday of these letters. Because of the persistent opposition being expressed by some, Governor Foster decided that he would not go forward with his proposal for this three-prong plan and expend valuable political capital pushing for its passage unless there was a strong consensus of support. Governor Foster indicated that it must be a package deal. As a result, President Strain said that it was unclear where things currently stood, stating that Jim Coleman was currently meeting with the Senate and that he would keep the Senate informed.

Next President Strain reported that parts of the Reveille's recent coverage of the issue of equity and counter-offer raises was incomplete and/or incorrect. He noted that the FSEC discussed this issue with both the Chancellor and the Provost and that the Provost had agreed to report to the Senate today on how this works.

President Strain also reported that the ASH Committee has been working with Academic Affairs to work out an improved version of their resolution on the withdrawal policy, and should have something soon for the Senate to examine. The FSEC selected names of people to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee on Pass/Fail and the Advising option and is in the process of contacting them.

The Senate Bylaws stipulate that a Nominating Committee be appointed by the Executive Committee from senators whose terms expire this spring for the purpose of recommending a slate of candidates for Senate officers for next year. Barbara Wittkopf (Library) has agreed to chair the committee and the other members are Daryl McKee (Management), Emily Batinksi (Foreign Languages), and Abner Hammond (Entomology). The Nominating Committee’s proposed slate of senators agreeing to be candidates for president, vice president, secretary, and two of the at-large positions will be announced at the March meeting. President Strain asked the Senators who were interested in either being candidates or who may want to suggest the name of some other senator, to please let him or Barbara know so they can in confidence pass the names on to the Nominating Committee. President Strain also indicated the need the have replacements to fill the vacancies of those senators whose terms are expiring and that he would be notifying the chairs of the various college policy committees of these upcoming vacancies. Also mentioned was that following the May meeting, there will be a reception at the Lod Cook Alumni Center to honor these retiring senators.

President Strain then noted that the Committee on Committees would soon be activated to solicit names of faculty to serve on standing Senate committees. President Strain encouraged everyone to respond and participate, reminding the Senate that faculty governance is only effective if the faculty actively participate.

The "Commitment To Community" statement established by students and faculty leadership groups, approved in principle by the Senate earlier in the year, was officially recognized at the 2/7/96 basketball game. There was a ceremony at the half-time presenting the statement to the chancellor, Faculty and Staff Senate presidents, and the SGA president.

Academic Affairs has forwarded to the Executive Committee for its approval several policy statements either being proposed new or revised. These include PS-22 - Student Absence from Class, PS-90 - Workman's Comp and Other University Insurance Programs, PS-67 - Illegal Use of Drugs and Alcohol Misuse, and a new PS on Dismissal of faculty for cause. The FSEC reviewed these policy statements and provided feedback to Academic Affairs. Those with significant impact on the faculty will be brought before the Senate for final approval.

President Strain then introduced the guest speaker, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost William Jenkins, to present his second "White" paper discussion of issues on how this campus might be restructured to better cope with state and national changes facing higher education.
Provost Jenkins Report

Provost Jenkins began by indicating he had two missions to accomplish with his presentation. The first of which would be to give the Senate an overview of the compensation adjustments which Academic Affairs deals with and how such adjustments are managed. The second part of the Provost’s presentation was to then present the second of his reflections papers. The complete text of Provost Jenkins’ reports are available in the Senate Office.

Compensation Adjustments

Provost Jenkins stated that he understood the concern and confusion over some recent merit increases due to an increased sensitivity to salaries and changes in salaries. He further stated that the financial management of an organization such as Louisiana State University was not simple, but rather very complex... “noting that LSU has experienced profound financial difficulties causing many shortfalls within the budget...i.e., support for the Library and matching funds for research grants.”

The Provost outlined to the Senate the steps that take place in the various campus units when a department head receives a request for a salary adjustment or merit increase. He noted that because there are approximately 4500 employees on LSU’s campus of which 1500 are faculty and the balance staff of one classification or another, there will be a variety of origins for the personnel actions that come through the system. The department head or chair is often the first step in such actions. Next, the request will come up to a Dean who will either approve or disapprove it. Then the proposed personnel action will go to HRM who will conduct a study on it. From HRM, the document will then go to one of five appropriate vice chancellors who deal with that particular area of specialization. Provost Jenkins stressed that the vice-chancellors rarely consider these issues in a vacuum or without consultation with others. There are frequent dialogues on these issues that go backwards and forwards until a consensus is finally reached. Then it goes to the chancellor for approval. From the chancellor’s office, it will go to the System Office where much the same process commences again. There are officials in the System Office who will review these actions and, on occasion, send them back to the campus for further review and study. After further investigation at the campus level, the personnel action will then go back to a Systems officer - such as the Vice President for Business Finance and Administration. From here, it will go to the System’s president for approval. After the President approves the action, the final step is approval by the Board of Supervisors. So, according to the Provost, there are about seven steps in the process of dialog dealing with the various types of personnel actions. He noted that these are not rare events, estimating that Academic Affairs deals with between 5 to 15 personnel actions of one kind or another on a monthly basis... some relate to faculty, others to staff and some may relate to an administrator of one capacity or another. The Provost emphasized that when personnel actions come directly to Academic Affairs, (before HRM has seen them), that HRM is often asked to do a review, which consists of careful studies utilizing many available comparative data tables showing comparisons on campus for job descriptions versus title and job requirements. He also stressed that such decisions are not reached without much care and only after all aspects of responsibility have been addressed and comparative studies made. Once a consensus is reached, Academic Affairs proceeds with the personnel action.

Provost Jenkins then briefly discussed the various sources of compensation adjustment (equity raises, counter offers, change in job responsibilities, and promotions). For each he identified the rationale for the adjustment and indicated that in each case the process is essentially as described above. He noted that since the adjustments occur throughout the year, approval through the Board also occurs throughout the year. Further, there may be delays in getting approval through the various levels so there may be little correlation between when an adjustment was approved and when it was initiated.

In reference to the average 3% merit raises that were approved at the December meeting for January, Jenkins indicated that those came from a separate pool set aside from institutional resources and internal reallocations. There was an increase in student revenue that also provided a source of funds for these increases. The Budget Committee approved those raises and the System established the process which was to be followed for giving the merit increases. Jenkins said that he believes that System procedures were followed very carefully. He added that he regrets the modesty of these increases, but nevertheless, it was a start to an improvement in the future. Jenkins then said that traditionally the machine run budget and any institutionally approved merit increases were the two documents on file in Hill Memorial Library. What he did not know was that the minutes of the Board of Supervisor’s meeting and all the personnel actions that were included therein have not traditionally been placed in Hill Memorial Library. But he committed to the Senate that this could be fixed very easily by either he or President Strain placing the agenda and minutes, including the personnel actions for all the campuses within the LSU System, on file at Hill Memorial Library. He concluded by saying that he deeply regretted the confusion over the two sets of personnel actions that came through in the December board meeting; and, the fact that there was a sense of some effort to hide the second set of those personnel actions. Jenkins said that this was not the case, but rather it was the same routine standard procedure that each of LSU’s Vice Chancellors goes through on a regular basis. He also noted that Bob Kuhn was currently conducting a study in order to get an analysis of some of the numbers that LSU has had during the past three years of staff and faculty, versus what the manager’s increases may have been and the magnitude of the raises.

Second White Paper

The Provost then distributed his second white paper entitled “Further Personal Reflections and Possible Future Directions for Our Academic Programs” for the second half of his presentation. He repeated his desire to have the faculty’s input and support and thanked those groups whom had drafted formal responses to his first discussion paper. He reminded the Senate that this exercise was to stimulate discussion, saying that because each of the Senators knew their disciplines far better than he, their help and collective wisdom was needed to guide him as the institution undertakes this discourse. Jenkins admitted that several of his suggestions were deliberately provocative and that this was intentional to stimulate dialogue and elicit innovative thinking about the future of LSU’s academic programs. He also stated that he could not be comprehensive or balanced because his purpose was to address efforts at fiscal relief and it was clearly academic programs that was his area of
responsibility. Admittedly, Jenkins said that there were many other aspects of LSU’s academic enterprise which they could be talking about, but could not do so at the present time due to budget constraints. He also stated that any decisions must be congruous with the institution’s annual budget and would have to be in harmony with the University’s strategic plan, the self-study recommendations, the College’s programmatic plans, the facilities master plan, the Board of Regents’ master plan and a number of other campus plans especially those related to assessment, which the Senate would be hearing more about soon.

Next the Provost presented his ideas on the topics of organizational structure and cooperative efforts, pointing out that there may be advantages to be gained from restructuring units. Although savings may not be realized immediately, costs can be reduced by streamlining, eliminating, and restructuring administrative systems into single more efficient entities and as administrative overhead subsides, funds will be released to support LSU research, teaching and public service endeavors. Provost Jenkins stated that “there will have to be absolute assurance that duplicate and triplicate administrative systems into single more efficient entities and as administrative overhead subsides, funds will be released advantages to be gained from restructuring units. Although savings may not be realized immediately, costs can be reduced by streamlining, eliminating, and restructuring administrative systems into single more efficient entities and as administrative overhead subsides, funds will be released to support LSU research, teaching and public service endeavors.” “This must be our goal for this exercise,” he explained to the Senators.

Secondly, Provost Jenkins indicated that great benefit could be derived from increasing levels of cooperation among units which would alleviate some pressures within the system and lead to collaborative ventures between faculty. Jenkins emphasized that there are no ‘ready-to-wear’ solutions using a quote from Edward Deming to exemplify this idea. “One of the obstacles of quality transformation is searching for a ready-made recipe, instead of creating one that meets the organization’s unique requirements.” Each case is special and each situation is unique. Broad guidelines must be used and common sense must prevail.

Provost Jenkins stated that the dialogue must begin with the fundamental assumption that Louisiana State University will remain the State’s only comprehensive Research-I university whose mission will be (1) to generate, preserve, disseminate and apply knowledge; (2) to cultivate the arts; (3) to offer challenging undergraduate, graduate and professional education to a highly qualified student body; (4) to prepare students for success in an increasingly competitive multi-cultural and technological society; (5) to excel in basic and applied research and creative achievement; and (6) to improve the social and economic well-being of the people of Louisiana through continuing education and contributions to literature, the arts, science, technology, business and industry. And, although the academic programs currently in place may enjoy enhanced or diminished emphasis during the years ahead, the undergraduate, graduate and professional offerings will remain essentially intact.

Provost Jenkins then gave four examples of possible reorganization/restructuring models for the various types of academic units at Louisiana State University primarily to serve as a spectrum of options. Alternatives could vary from minor tinkering to major restructuring, resulting in perhaps only six or seven colleges with a total of about 30 rather than 72 departments.

In his closing commentary, the Provost repeated that the purpose of these discussion papers was to prompt active dialogue in the University community so that together solutions could be developed to relieve the university’s immediate fiscal difficulties and at the same time ensure the continued progress of our university. He also said that the possibility of a major paradigm shift resulting from Governor Foster’s proposals was still an open question. He concluded by saying that everyone knows higher education is in a time of transition, if not transformation, and that he sincerely believes it is his duty and responsibility as Provost to explore all options and to work with the faculty to develop the best possible solutions available for the many dilemmas facing our academic enterprise. Jenkins said that he realizes the natural aversion to dealing with change, but under the circumstances, has no choice but to ask for the faculty’s assistance in dealing with the challenges facing us in a collective and cohesive manner.

President Strain commented that all of the Senators had an obligation as representatives of their constituencies to become engaged in this process.

Old Business

Dan Marin presented a report from the ad hoc committee to examine Writing Across the Curriculum. Copies of the report were distributed to the Senators. Marin began his report by highlighting the three stages or segments of the committee’s discussions. First, the committee began by trying to formulate a definition of what they thought “Writing Across the Curriculum” was for the student, for the University, and for the individual faculty member. Secondly, given that definition, the committee asked what are the constraints facing us at LSU if we decide to implement ‘writing across the curriculum’ as submitted in this particular definition. According to Marin, the committee tried to anticipate what would occur and what the concerns would be, and these concerns were formulated in the form of questions. And, finally, given those constraints, the committee came up with a list of recommendations that were thought to be reasonable. Those recommendations have been translated into a final resolution asking for the Senate’s support for this idea. A copy of Resolution 95-04 is attached to these minutes.

First of all, the implementation of ‘writing across the curriculum’ was not something the committee envisioned as occurring all at once. Rather it was viewed as an evolutionary process... a process that proceeds as particular departments and faculty members decide that it is something they want to do. Marin indicated that this would be a voluntary matter and the committee expects it to proceed as an evolution rather than a revolution.

The second point made by Marin was that the committee did not envision a program that would ask individual faculty members to teach English grammar or sentence structure. If students are having difficulty with these type things, they can be sent or encouraged to go to the
Writing Center, where these problems can be addressed if they persist beyond the freshman year. What the committee did think the individual faculty members should find interesting was teaching the discipline’s specific aspects of writing and thus starting their students in what would be a proper arena of endeavor for a particular course.

The third segment of the report addressed the need for student interest and student demand. Marin indicated that departments would become interested in offering writing courses or designating writing courses if the students wanted those courses. One way to get the students to want those courses was to get the recruiters and career people who come to our campus and tell them that the LSU transcripts will have a designation beside those courses taken indicating that these were writing oriented courses and that these type courses are desirable. If LSU can get recruiters to come on campus and look for students who have transcripts with those courses on them, Marin thinks the demand for these courses will be generated by the students. Therefore, the committee’s writing across the curriculum proposal will ultimately be driven by student demand, explained Marin.

President Strain then asked if there were any questions regarding Resolution 95-04 which was attached to the back of the Ad Hoc Committee’s Report on Writing Across the Curriculum. There being none, the resolution was in essence moved and seconded, as parliamentary procedure does not require a second for committee resolutions. President Strain then announced that he would assign the responsibility for developing and monitoring the committee’s recommendations to the Faculty Senate standing committee, Improvement in Instruction, noting that this seemed appropriate for that group.

Strain announced that the resolution was now officially before the Senate and for the Senators to go back to their colleagues, discuss and gather feedback so that it could be on the agenda for the March meeting for discussion and hopefully a vote. President Strain reported on the Ad Hoc Committee on Program Review established by the Provost with names provided by the Senate and Graduate Council. This committee, chaired by Laura Lindsay, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, was to develop a cyclical curricular review process for undergraduate and graduate programs. The SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) site visit resulted in five recommendations on which the university was required to respond, two of which dealt with this cyclical curricular review process. The proposal from this committee was to be presented at the February meeting, however, the Executive Committee felt it had not yet reached a point where it could be brought forward.

Resolution 95-05, which President Strain drafted in support of the Governor’s reorganization plans for Higher Education, was distributed to the Senators for their review. The resolution was moved by Senator John Collier, and seconded by Senator Brij Mohan. Senator Collier also moved that the Senate suspend the rules which required waiting until the next meeting for a vote. The motion to suspend the rules was seconded and passed, and the floor was opened for discussion of Resolution 95-05.

President Strain responded to several questions regarding governance, budgetary considerations, and other topics related to the higher education plan referred to in the resolution. After a discussion of these and other points, the resolution was passed overwhelmingly.

New Business:

Senator John Collier explained that there has been a lot of concern about parking on campus, both by faculty members, staff members and students. Complaints have come to the Executive Committee from several sources. Recently, some of the complaints were due to the new Computer Sciences Center that caused some changes in parking. Even though parking seems to be a common concern, there is still some well-placed resistance to doing some of the things Collier would like to see done on the central campus. With the approval of the Executive Committee, he got together a small committee composed of his wife, Ex-President Billy Collier, Floris St. Amant, President of the Staff Senate, and Eric Monday, President of the Student Government Association. Collier stated that the committee wanted to address first the resistance to the aesthetics of having different kinds of parking structures or facilities placed on the central campus. Senator Collier indicated that he was aware of very strong opposition to the idea of a parking garage, but he is interested in determining if an acceptable structure can be found.

The first activity planned by Collier’s group is to jointly sponsor student contests to come up with innovative ideas about the kinds of parking structures that LSU should have. The tentative date for the contest to end is March 31, 1996. The main purpose of the contest is to address the issue of aesthetics on the campus. Collier related some ideas offered in the past. He concluded by saying that it is unlikely that we will solve all parking problems completely, no campus ever has. However, he thought that we can do things to alleviate the problem and make it better. He then asked the Senate if there were any objections to this because the committee was just getting started and he did not want them to expend a lot of effort if they were going off in the wrong direction. He also solicited any ideas or suggestions from the Senate.

After some discussion and questions from several Senators, the consensus of the group seemed to be for the committee to proceed with the task.

There being no further new business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Kenneth W. Paxton
Secretary