Address by Steve Perry, Chief of Staff, Governor’s Office

- Renewal of the sales tax could create significant funds for higher education technology, libraries, deferred maintenance.
- The Board of Regents will be again designated as a superboard, and members of all major boards will have to meet merit qualifications.
- Funding for charity hospitals and for LSU will be completely separated when LSU takes over the system.

Committee Reports

- Resolution 96-04 passed, renewing Project Access for another year, but calling for a review in Fall 1997 when more data on the progress of former Access students becomes available.

Faculty Senate Minutes

Meeting called to order: 3:03 pm. Guests included Vice-Chancellor Coleman, Interim Provost Hargrave, Associate Vice-Chancellors Lindsay and Fogel, Ronald Ross (Dean of the School of Music), Rick Ramsey (President of the Staff Senate), Linus Lee, Jason Bullock (both of the Reveille).

1. Address by Steve Perry, Chief of Staff, Governor’s Office. Mr. Perry addressed the senate for slightly over an hour on initiatives to be taken by the Foster administration, especially initiatives related to higher education, and to urge faculty support for renewal of the sales tax. He stated at the beginning that the state is “at a cross roads” in education on all levels, and said that the administration was prepared to do “radical” and “amazing” things, although much was “in peril.” A special session will be held beginning Feb. 23 to deal with work force development and job training, the state charity hospital system and its transfer to LSU, reforms in K-12, reform of the governance of higher education, and systemic changes in finances. He wanted to make sure the “intellectual leaders of this community” were informed of upcoming events.

Sales Tax renewal. Mr. Perry outlined the benefits of renewing the “fourth penny of the four cent sales tax,” especially that it would bring in $110 million this year. He pointed out that the federal government will not help with the Medicaid debt if the tax is not renewed, thus causing a half billion dollar debt to the state. The surpluses the state are now enjoying ($318 million in FY 95-96) can be used only to retire long-term debt, but can open up other funds for use. The immediate goal is to deal with deferred maintenance and fixing highways. This year a $180 million surplus is expected, releasing money for education, including technology for the K-12 classroom, principal training and development, $10 million in incentive awards for K-12 innovation, and charter school start-ups. Overall they plan to spend $300 million for infrastructure and the $180 million surplus for development. The sales tax renewal will create a K-12 pay raise, $15 million for libraries and equipment for universities, special education for disruptive students, basic K-3 reading, and an education initiative for the poorest children. They plan a $200 million investment in education overall this spring, and addition another $50-70 million in university infrastructure. By the end of the third year they want to clear the fifteen year backlog in maintenance at universities and set up trust funds for repairs on new buildings.

Governance of Higher Education. The administration is “trying to completely change the culture of Louisiana government” in which education has never been a priority. The public and the legislature do not understand the governance of higher education. A single board seems like an impossibility, and, if created, would probably be swamped with business. The Foster administration realized that the Board of Regents was originally intended to be a superboard, but subsequent legislation has weakened it. This spring the administration will try to remove all impediments to the Regents’ original mission and status. The administration will also demand an identical committee structure on all boards, to insure that comparisons are adequately made, and furthermore Regents committees will
have members from the other boards, as can the Regents’ staff. In formula funding, LSU will always be the flagship university. University CEOs will have to be “ratified” by the Regents, who will also have the right to give a vote of “no confidence” and to force the other boards to review a CEO. A draft of the bill will be out by the end of the week. The Regents’ staff will have the “best and the brightest” from Louisiana campuses. Members of major boards will be selected using merit qualifications.

Charity Hospitals. LSU can better manage and upgrade the “antiquated, dilapidated” hospital system while benefiting from the greatly increased research possibilities. This will also greatly benefit the most vulnerable patients in the state. By statute, hospital funds and LSU funds are completely separate and segregated.

Summary. Louisiana is at the crossroads which will determine its direction for the next twenty years; the future of LSU is on the line this spring.

Question period. Major points arising from questions: Continuation budgets are not yet feasible, but education will be the only branch of state government which will be allowed to grow. He will check on ways to provide raises for classified employees, who did not get an equitable raise; however, it is difficult to separate university staff from other state employees in a similar classification. The administration wants to make the basic information of government available on the Internet, especially information about ethics matters, and the government is “totally committed” to upgrading technology, including the Internet 2, better delivery systems, and the technology infrastructure; in addition, teacher training in technology and attempting to rationalize the state’s incompatible technology systems will be a priority. The administration wants to identify people with “a true love of higher education” for the boards when considering merit qualifications for board members. The sales tax is popular with voters and, in any case, has no viable alternative; constitutionally the income tax cannot be changed from 1952 levels. Universities will have choices on how to spend the money, whether for libraries or equipment, and if the tax is renewed the $15 million for equipment and libraries will be permanent. The administration wants to create a dialogue with higher education.

2. Approval of December minutes. Moved by Sen. Stockbauer, passed by voice vote.

3. President’s Report.
   A. PS-36 has been returned from the attorneys with only minor changes, so the Executive Committee suggests not bringing it back to the full senate. Copies are available, and President Collier should be called if there are objections. The three senate representatives on the Revision Committee were all past presidents: Kinney, B. Collier, and Strain.
   B. The food services contract has gone to the Board of Supervisors with the Faculty Club included.
   C. The Provost Search Committee selection will be completed this week.
   D. The various dean committees are progressing.

Committee Reports.
ASH Committee report on Access was presented by Lonnie Vandeveer, chair, who noted that Access was now coming to an end of its two-year authorization and needed to be renewed. After going over the history of Access and statistics about enrollment, success rates, etc., he said the ASH committee felt Access was evolving and needed an annual review. Senator Cherry pointed out the first Access class has entered the student population, and good information about how Access students fare after leaving Access should be available soon. He therefore presented the following resolution (seconded Yannitell):

Senate Resolution 96-04

Whereas the Access program is now in its third year, and the first two Access classes have now entered the regular undergraduate student pool, so that information will very soon be available about the performance of former Access students in regular classes;

Therefore be it resolved:

that Project Access be continued for an additional year,
that Academic Affairs and the Access program provide additional information to the ASH Committee about the performance of Access and former Access students in regular university classes, and

that the ASH Committee review Access again in the Fall 1997 semester.

Vice-Chancellor Fogel suggested that, since the admission program for next fall is already underway, renewal or termination of Access should be soon since the program dies this year if not formally renewed. Vice Chancellor Lindsay said that we already have data which will help in the selection process. Sen. Waguespack wanted to see if the program was really financially self-sufficient, and wondered if students who would benefit from Access-type services being excluded. Vice-Chancellor Fogel created a surplus of $240,000 this year. Sen. Kinney moved to suspend the rules and vote on the resolution at this meeting; this carried by a voice vote. The resolution the passed unanimously.

6. Old Business. None


Meeting adjourned at 4:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Malcolm Richardson
Secretary