

**University of Iowa Faculty Senate
Report of the Government Relations Committee**

Annual Report 1999-2000

Members: Carolyn Colvin, David Drake, Hillary Sale, James Torner, Yi Li, Margaret Mills, Richard Valentine. Ex Officio: Jonathan Carlson, Bob Wiley

Charge

The Governmental Relations Committee has primary responsibility for developing and improving the faculty's relationship with the government of the State of Iowa. It is also authorized to take responsibility for any other issues referred to it by the Faculty Senate or Council that may involve the faculty's relationship to other governmental entities. The committee shall be composed of the vice president of the Senate and six members appointed for three year staggered terms pursuant to normal procedures of the Senate. The chair of the committee shall be one of the members who hold three-year terms. The president of the Senate and the past president of the Senate may serve ex officio as members of the committee for one year.

Activities

- 1) Members along with President Coleman and Faculty Senate President Carlson visited with Governor Vilsack and Lt Governor Pederson on August 24, 1999 in Des Moines at the State Capitol. This discussion included maintaining and achieving quality through library and faculty support and improving the level of entering freshman. The Governor outlined his concerns of retaining graduates, budgetary limitations and investing in Iowa.
- 2) Office of Government Relations (Mark Braun and Derek Willard) was established this fall. Mr. Braun and Dr. Willard met with the Committee at regular meetings in January and February.
- 3) The Government Relations Committee hosted with the Faculty Council and the Office of Government Relations local legislators from Johnson County at the Iowa Memorial Union on March 10, 2000. The legislators reviewed the current session and budget priorities and timetables.
- 4) A planned visit by Gov. Vilsack and Lt. Gov. Pederson in Iowa City is to be scheduled as soon as the legislative session is completed.

Issues

- 1) Staff council representative
The Staff Council was interested in having a joint committee or a representative attend the Faculty Senate Government Relations Committee. It was decided that dialog with the Staff Council might be useful but our purposes, issues and responsibilities to the faculty were different and that we need to be separate.
- 2) The Committee determined several issues that have legislative impact. While budget was not the primary concern of the Committee, since the budget for this year had already been submitted, the issues had budgetary implications. These were major issues for maintaining the quality of the University.
 - a) Maintenance of library collections and subscriptions to leading journals was a major priority. The quality of education and research would decrease if maintenance could not be achieved.
 - b) The retention and recruitment of faculty was a concern because of the increasing aging of the faculty and the cost of competing for quality faculty and start-up costs for new faculty.

- c) Another issue was the need expressed that tuition be increased to overcome a decreasing budgetary commitment from the State, and to increase the motivation of students in appreciation of their education. The bargain rate of tuition was considered a detriment to achieving a quality education.
 - d) The quality of students entering the students in skills and abilities was expressed as a major concern. Raising the entrance requirements was discussed as a possible means to set a higher standard.
 - e) Another issue of concern to the Committee was legislation passed that may have a negative impact on education and research. It was discussed that is were necessary to be notified when such legislation is being considered and that faculty being available for informational exchange on the impact of the legislation.
- 3) Two issues raised by the Governor and reiterated by the legislators were teaching evaluation and graduates staying in the State. Maintaining teaching quality was a concern expressed and the concept of teaching evaluation was discussed. The departure of college graduates to other states and higher paying jobs were expressed. The development of the State economy during a time of worker shortages and the need for higher technology and innovative business and research was mentioned as the desire that graduates stay. The Committee discussed possible barriers and incentives.
 - 4) The Committee also discussed how to increase cooperation and collaboration with the government organizations and representatives. Because of lobbying restrictions there are limitations to what faculty can do. Being available for meetings and for contact by the Office of Government Relations was discussed. The University created a website for the University of Iowa Office of Government Relations. Yi Li developed a draft website for the Committee.
 - 5) The Governor's budget and the House and Senate budgets were lower than requested and has resulted in a greater concern of the faculty in maintaining quality and infrastructure. Much of the Committee's attention diverted from not only trying to maintain quality but also keeping the University's infrastructure, faculty and staff salaries, and research and educational prominence at a high level.

Recommendations

- 1) The Government Relations Committee should increase activity with the Governor and legislators in the summer and fall of the year. The contact before the legislative session on the University attributes and needs is important prior to the session. This will be difficult to accomplish in an election year.
- 2) The Government Relations Committee should be included in activities with the governmental representatives and Iowa alumni. Administrative and alumni events should feature members of the faculty. The Committee should facilitate faculty participation in these events.
- 3) The Government Relations Committee should be a conduit to the Faculty Senate and their faculty colleagues on legislation affecting their ability to teach and do research as well as maintaining their quality and productivity. Communication with the University of Iowa governmental representatives in a key part of this information exchange.