

**Faculty Senate Report to the Missouri Association of Faculty Senates
Missouri State University
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Submitted by Christopher Herr, Missouri State University Faculty Senate Chair

Important Issues

Probably the most important issue on our campus right now is the search for our next President. At the end of a 4-month search process, the search committee (which has good faculty representation but is chaired by someone outside the university) identified two finalists: Randy J. Dunn, the current President at Murray State University, and Clif Smart, the Interim President at MSU. Some faculty members have expressed concerns about Dr. Dunn, who was formerly state schools superintendent in Illinois, appointed by Rod Blagojevich, and it seems likely that Mr. Smart, who served as university General Counsel before being appointed, is the favored candidate of the Board of Governors and the community leaders who sit on the search committee. Our current interim Provost is likely to retire within a year or two, so the appointment of the new President will also come with the appointment of a new Provost. The candidates will be on campus next Week (October 8 and 10) for their interviews.

This fall, the Faculty Senate is continuing the process of revisions to our General Education program. The revision began two years ago with a Task Force appointed by the former Provost, with the goals of 1) making the program more relevant to 21st century skills students need to succeed in the marketplace and 2) more fully integrating our Public Affairs mission into the program. The structure is almost approved for the program, and a call for courses will go out soon after. It is likely, however, that while there will be a closer integration of Public Affairs into General Education, the new program will look much like the old.

Faculty Handbook

Our Faculty Handbook is undergoing its septennial review in committee, with the changes to be brought forward to Faculty Senate next year. The most pressing issues will be compensation (in particular, a merit pay system that faculty can support), the integration of the newly formed School of Agriculture, and tenure/promotion issues with a growing number of clinical faculty.

Budget Issues

The Executive Budget Committee of the university met in mid-September to discuss how to reallocate money coming from the better than expected state appropriation. The current plan is to offer a 1.5% across the board raise mid-year, along with the guarantee not to raise health insurance premiums or deductibles this year. There is also a chance that we will switch health care providers; bids for the contract have been submitted and

the committee is reviewing them. We will not meet again to discuss the university budget for FY14 until the budget picture is clearer from the state.

Other Issues

The administration continues to search for alternate delivery methods for classes to compete with neighboring universities and community colleges. We have begun an Evening College Plus program that will allow students to block schedule classes in the evening, with a concomitant increase in course offerings for those classes. The faculty are somewhat divided about this push. On the one hand, programs—particularly graduate programs—have embraced online delivery and alternate models, but there is concern among other faculty that there is no real faculty oversight of the courses/programs that go online (for example, a program can be put online without the vote of the faculty within that department). A resolution to require courses moving to an online delivery format go through the curricular process passed Senate in May, but was challenged and voted down in August.

The Board of Governors responded to student complaints about +/- grading by holding a discussion at the May BOG meeting. Students argued that the 2009 implementation of the new system, which is not mandatory, had inflated grades, but information from the Provost's office showed that it had not. Ultimately, the BOG determined that the grading system was a faculty issue, but urged more widespread adoption of +/- grading.

Study Away programs continue to increase at Missouri State, and the Faculty Senate is in the process of creating a standing committee to oversee the implementation of short-term, faculty-led study away programs, which have more than tripled in the past few years.

The terms of several of our Governors are up this year, so we anticipate four new members to be appointed after the November elections.