

Comprehensive Colleges Sector Report
SUNY Faculty Senate Spring plenary
May 1-3, 2014
Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, NY

The budget issue dominated our discussions at the meeting since many of us are struggling with fiscal issues tied to enrollment.

Questions for the chancellor:

- 1.) Given the struggles to meet our mission given problems with declining enrollment, funding Open SUNY and other online initiatives, and the financial fallout from LICH, we feel we are being compressed because of unfunded mandates from Albany and shrinking budgets. What is your vision for where we fit in the system and where might we be in five or 10 years? Do you think we will grow or shrink? Do you think our mission will fundamentally change? How can we begin to have a dialogue about our future? What mechanism do we, as comprehensive colleges, need to engage in?
- 2.) Most of the comprehensive colleges are concerned about the impact of stagnant budgets, declining enrollments, and sweeps of reserves once LICH is settled; also, tuition increases are offset by salary and benefit increases. When can we expect financial relief and help from the SUNY system so that we can continue to fulfill our basic mission to our students and communities? As we face the challenges ahead how is system going to help campuses address mandates from Albany that are largely unfunded.

Although we didn't ask these questions, we are also concerned with:

- 1.) The sector should have a place at the table and share in the funding for undergraduate research. We would like to have a conversation with Tim Killeen or his deputies about this.
- 2.) There are shifts at system that aren't transparent. So how do we get to know more about these personnel moves? In other words, who reports to whom? What reporting structures are in place since we need to know whom to call at System HQ in Albany when we have questions?
- 3.) Many campuses are concerned about faculty and administrative searches, Gen Ed reforms and dysfunctional administrative relations with faculty. For example, adjuncts seem to be doing much more as tenured faculty retire or leave.
- 4.) We also would like to see more and/or better guidelines and possible changes in programmatic offerings due to the transfer path decisions that are forthcoming.
- 5.) Start-Up NY does not seem to benefit all the colleges. Therefore, we feel the initiative should be refined to benefit more campuses. For example, questions seem to revolve around what would happen if a business doesn't live up to the contract?

- 6.) Budget redux: Tuition increases are offset by contractual increases that the state doesn't fund, which places the burden on the campuses. (i.e., Is there a TAP fix in the works that may settle things?) Along a parallel line, there is a blurring between administrative and instructional budgets as administrative costs seem to be absorbed more and more into the instructional budgets as, for example, former administrators still get administrative pay but out of the instructional budgets.
- 7.) As LICH seems to settle, will there still be a "LICH tax"? And, if so, will there be any sort of relief for the sector in the budget? How can the system preserve a commitment to teaching and learning if we face that? As it stands, the feeling is that we are compromising what our students get because of budgetary problems.

All of this echoes what this sector reported back at the Winter Plenary Meeting at Oneonta: "That means we want to position ourselves so there isn't a withering on the vine, if you will, of the professoriate. The next logical question then is, what is the value of our individuated missions on our campuses? Our answer includes that we will continue to focus on adding value to the undergraduate student experience on our own campuses, and that we will continue to make the case that students who come to our campuses are involving themselves in the whole integrated experience of life on – or as a commuter to – a SUNY comprehensive college.

"We are different campuses with different goals and challenges and we want to maintain our individual culture and identity within the overall framework as we continue to serve native and transfer students.

"That a lot of ideas and initiatives (e.g., Open SUNY, Student Mobility, Seamless Transfer, "systemness," etc.) under way or planned are harmful to the distinctive culture and diversity of our individual campuses and programs. So what resources (financial, technological, etc.) will be provided to the comprehensive colleges to support the developmental needs of students who pursue the new pathways?

"The SUNY Mission Statement talks about a geographically distributed system of diverse campuses with differentiated and designated missions to meet the needs of ... students and to address local, regional and state needs and goals. So, then, the comprehensive colleges are concerned that some initiatives seem to negate the rich campus autonomy we have nurtured."

Joe Marren
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