

Dan Luchtel, Chair
University of Washington Faculty Senate
Remarks at April 24, 2008 Faculty Senate Meeting

As I've mentioned before, I came into this job with an agenda. During our last meeting, I updated you on some progress on meeting my stated goals. On the other hand, a characteristic of this job is that unexpected things keep coming up. I already discussed one such issue a couple of months ago with the flare-up when the Seattle Times published a series of articles about the UW football program. I would like to mention two other, hopefully more edifying, unexpected issues.

Earlier this week, the UW had an accreditation site visit by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, one of six regional agencies that accredit approximately 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States. These higher education commissions are private, nonprofit organizations. Beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, regional accreditation has been a voluntary enterprise, but its "gatekeeper" function has made regional accreditation a major force in American higher education.

Before serving as Senate Chair, I have to admit that I had little knowledge of or interest in the institutional accrediting process. This is a view I probably share with most of my colleagues. But it is a mistaken view since faculty should play an important role in the accreditation process.

I was pleased that the Senate leadership was able to play a role as I along with David Lowell and Gail Stygall participated in the site visit. I thought it was a very positive experience. The site visitors were inquisitive and engaging to talk with. A full-scale accreditation process occurs every 10 years but this visit was an interim 5-year review to address six recommendations that arose from the last 10-year review in 2003. The six recommendations asked the university to address six problem areas. They were: 1) inconsistencies in perceptions of future relationships among the 3 UW campuses; 2) academic assessment and setting of learning objectives for students; 3) managing scarce resources; 4) how to restore and maintain competitive salary compensation for faculty; 5) addressing information technology security; and 6) efforts to increase the number of faculty and students from underrepresented groups.

My main reason for telling you about this is to highly recommend that you download and read the document prepared for this site visit. It is called the *2008 Interim Accreditation Report*. This self-study document is a gold mine of information about the university. It is available as a downloadable pdf file on the Faculty Senate Web Page; go to the Faculty Senate web page, then click on Offsite Resources, and then on Decennial Review. Again, click on Offsite Resources, and then on Decennial Review.

Of particular interest were the actions taken to address the six recommendations and further informational documents about the faculty. For example, there is a section on faculty that lists significant changes in policies and benefits affecting faculty and a table that lists the institutional faculty profile for 2007. This table shows the number of appointments in the various ranks along with salary ranges and years of experience. There is also an appendix with the heading, the *2007 Faculty Fact Sheet*, which gives descriptive statistics about the UW faculty.

A second unexpected but very enlightening experience has been to serve on what is known as the President's Advisory Committee on Enterprise Risk Management. V'ella Warren, who is the Senior Vice President for Finance and Facilities, chairs this committee and she runs a very tight ship. She indeed has her finger on the pulse of the university and worries about the disasters that might befall it. For some of the documents of this effort, go to her home page or search on "Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)".

The focus of Enterprise Risk Management is to identify and prioritize risks throughout the institution. Their number and variety is stunning and include compliance risks, such as correctly filling out Faculty Effort Certification forms; financial risks, such as investment of endowment funds in foreign markets; and strategic risks, such as recruitment and retention of top faculty, key staff, and graduate students.

What makes the meetings of this committee so interesting, besides watching V'ella in action, are some stunning factoids that are produced on occasion. For example, the expensive housing market in Seattle is increasingly a problem for the university, particularly when it comes to recruitment of faculty and staff. The factoid is that 42% of our faculty and staff face a commute of more than 45 minutes. Our circumstance is that fewer and fewer of our faculty and staff can afford to live in the city where the university is located.

So now let me introduce the person who has the answers for your questions and concerns! By the way, I understand that the university passed the accreditation review with flying colors.