

Illinois Wesleyan University
CUPP Report
February 2008

CUPP met four times in January, including a two-hour meeting with the provost on the first day of classes. The goal of that meeting was to make considerable progress on the subject of academic affairs' administrative structure. Last year's CUPP spent much of the year studying our present structure and advising the administration on alternatives to it. This year's CUPP has focused more particularly on the structure suggested by the administration; that structure includes a new dean.

The January 7 meeting with the provost was helpful. One suggestion in particular seemed to energize the room: what if the new dean position focused on our curriculum? What if the new dean gave particular (though not exclusive) attention to the General Education program, and to those other areas, such as interdisciplinary programs, seemingly frustrated by a lack of voice? What if the new dean could provide leadership on the subject of strategic curricular planning, and also help programs, departments, and majors connect in ways that strengthen our students' experience and perhaps even make it truly distinct? What if the new dean could offer innovative ways in which diversity could be a curricular objective and not merely part of a job title? What if the new dean worked closely with the Associate Dean of Faculty Development to ensure that our curriculum kept pace with faculty talents and interests? What if one purpose of adding a new dean was to ease the provost's workload but not to lessen the direct connection she presently enjoys with faculty, in particular those with supervisory responsibilities?

The new dean's position may not solve every imaginable problem or frustration, but it holds the promise of more faculty voice, a less burdened Office of the Provost, and a more lasting interpretation of diversity's importance. As to the first: academic affairs would now include an additional dean who might rise from the ranks of the faculty to champion and coordinate our curriculum. As to the second: the new dean might assist the provost on other important matters, such as providing assistance with managing the academic affairs' budget. As to the third: a curriculum that genuinely values diversity is itself more likely to help us recruit students and faculty. A supporting staff person, or perhaps even the dean, could also help build crucial connections with the business community. These connections are critical in cases where a candidate's partner also needs a job; building external relationships is time consuming, but they matter greatly in faculty searches.

The details matter greatly, too, and CUPP does not pretend to have mastered them. Indeed, the council (and the provost) are eager for the faculty's feedback on this new dean's focus. Do you believe it is a step forward? Can you recommend improvements? We welcome them so that we can complete our advisory role with confidence that the faculty have been heard.

CUPP also is continuing its efforts to understand, and improve, our committee governance structure. We will be meeting with the Nominating Committee in March,

after that committee has collected faculty volunteers and compiled committee slates. The purpose of our work is to determine if some of these committees can operate more efficiently, perhaps by being consolidated or eliminated.

We are grateful to the president for regularly visiting with us and asking our advice on important matters, most recently next year's budget. At this moment there is a manageable shortfall. The reasons for that shortfall would considerably lengthen this report (and, in all events, are captured by recent reports of the Faculty Visitors to the Board of Trustees), but our January visit with the president clarified that (1) the budget will be balanced; and (2) the president is absolutely committed to minimizing the shortfall's impact on faculty salaries.

In a future faculty meeting, perhaps in March, CUPP would like the faculty's input on the faculty handbook, in particular revisions to it. We might benefit from a firmer understanding or agreement as to how the handbook is revised, and under what circumstances revisions should include faculty input.

Speaking of the handbook, it clearly spells out the manner in which CUPP replacement elections are to be conducted, and further requires me to call for nominations to serve on CUPP. If your division will be electing a new CUPP representative this year, then interested candidates have until the second Monday in February (February 11) to be nominated. Nominations should be directed to the outgoing CUPP representative.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert A. Kearney
CUPP Chair