1-1-2004


Howard Rock Professor

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Email message forwarded by Elizabeth Bird, President, USF Faculty Senate:

The budget recommendations for the universities are now in. The Governor recommended that E&G funds, the major area for academic funds, be at $1.637 billion, a sizable increase from the last year of $1.552 billion and includes enrollment funding. The Senate increased even that to $1.665b, but the House refused to include enrollment growth and came up with a bare bones amount of $1.573b. This will have to be resolved, hopefully in favor of the Senate and Governor. If you have any influence, use it. In addition, all three budgets include funds for matching gifts, the Senate and Governor include money for areas of special need (teaching, nursing, etc.) but the House does not and neither the House nor the Senate include the $20m for Centers of Special Excellence that the Governor had proposed.

Professor Howard Rock, the Faculty representative on the Board of Governors.

Report of Meeting of the Board of Governors, March 17-18, 2004, Orlando

1. Medical Schools The first part of the meeting was devoted to a three hour and more workshop on medical education in Florida. It explored whether or not there was a need for more physicians and, if so, how to get them. Dr. Richard A. Cooper of the Health Policy Institute of Madison, Wisconsin, gave an in depth discussion showing that there was a significant shortage of physicians looming in the next fifteen years. This could be solved by expanding current medical school and/or building new ones. It was noted that the number of medical school graduates in Florida could be explained in the current schools by 182 for approximately $22m. However, expansion or new medical schools will not solve the problem unless new residencies are created and they are expensive and there has been no expansion for a number of years because of lack of funding. Dr. Cooper pointed out that there was no point in expanding the supply of physicians unless there is a similar increase in residencies.

Presentations by the Presidents of FAU, FIU and UCF all showed interest in medical education, FAU was only concerned with a partnership with the University of Miami. UCF and FIU, while interested in partnerships, have plans as well for full medical education.

The Vice-Chair of the BOG, John Dasburg, said that there was now enough knowledge for the BOG to form a model. This model, would presumably, be used to evaluate new proposals for medical schools. It is not clear when the model would be available.

Comments made to the press after the meeting by Commissioner Jim Horne indicate that neither he nor Governor Bush currently favor new medical schools, while co-chair of the Medical School Ad-hoc Committee, Zach Zachariah was also negative, not seeing a need for new physicians in Florida at this time. The situation is fluid, however, and I believe, a well prepared proposal within the guidelines of the new model will receive fair consideration. Community needs also need to be addressed in any proposals.

The implementation of a new School of Chiropractic medicine at FSU, for which $9m has been budgeted for the first phase, has not been discussed yet at the BOG. I had considered bringing up this issue before the BOG but deferred as I decided it was best to see the legislative record as a whole before reacting to it. However, there is a real question as to whether or not a new medical school, chiropractic,
allopathic or osteopathic, should be approved unless it has been fully vetted by the BOG. Governor Graham has stated that is what the Constitution now requires, and he may be correct. I will bring this critical issue up before the full meeting of the ACFS on May 7 for its opinion and we can take our decision back to the BOG in May or June for action if deemed necessary.

2. **Accountability** A special meeting of the sub-committee of the Accountability Committee met to see if it was possible to determine whether or not is was possible to evaluate student outcomes in courses of study. The meeting was rather boisterous and sometimes even chaotic. Chairman Uhlfelder repeatedly stated that he was not interested in any kind of F-CAT test as has been attributed to him. Commissioner Horne warned that time was running out for the ten percent of the budget $250m that was to be disbursed on the basis of accountability. (Six other measures have already been adopted). At the end it was determined to have a workshop at the next meeting to demonstrate how accountability on student performance is being measured at different universities and to have a number of university provosts meet to see if they can come up with a methodology/measure that could be employed in time for legislative acceptance.

3. **Academic Freedom.** The Strategic Planning Committee decided not to include Academic Freedom in the Duties and Responsibilities of the BOG, largely, I believe, on the basis that it was the domain of the local UBOTS. I found this a very unsatisfactory outcome, as there are a number of responsibilities that both bodies have. I am reassured however, that the BOG will listen to any serious case that is brought to them, and that, since there is a faculty member on the BOG, they will have direct access to the BOG should they need it. I also have confidence that most members of the BOG have a deep respect for academic freedom.

4. **Audit Committee.** The Audit Committee found that FIU had fully met its responsibilities in the problems with the H-CET program. The final results of the Federal audit are not yet known, nor are the consequences facing the university. However, the university has acted quickly to make sure that safeguards against any future problems are in place.

5. **Council of 100 Funding Plan.** The Board heard a lengthy presentation by the Council of 100, a Council that consists of the states’ leading businessmen. They have issued a report entitled *We Must Do Better*. The key recommendations are: a redirection of $366m of funds and a boosting of appropriations by FTE by 14% by 2008-09; raising Bright Futures standards to a 1070 minimum (it’s now below the national average); increased need based funding from $80m to $243m; increasing aid to private universities from $80m to $120m; increasing tuition by 13% per year for five years so that it reaches the national average.

Florida only produces 25 bachelor degrees per $1m dollars spent, versus the national average of 29. This is because of its low tuition and low Bright Future levels. In addition Florida supports 86% of the verge cost of an education, as opposed to the national average of 73% because of low tuition, and low Bright Futures levels. If these gaps are closed an additional $400m per year would be available for higher education. It would also allocate more need based funds to poorer students. One of the facts least understood is that when tuition levels are too low, it causes universities to have less ability to admit students most in need. The Council believes that if its funding model is adopted then 4,5000 more students would receive bachelor degrees each year and the return on taxpayer funds would rise from 25.1 to 27.8 graduates per million dollars spent. These additional funds would accrue even though appropriated funds remain relatively level.

This is one of the most important developments in higher education funding proposed. It would propel Florida into the leading ranks of higher education and it should be closely monitored and, I believe, supported. The website of the council of 100 is www.FC100.org. Click on “Position Papers” and it is the last report listed.

6. **Differential Tuition for Non Degree Seeking Students and Students Taking more than 115% of their major requirements.** The Board discussed the issue of higher tuition, conceivably out-of-state tuition, for non degree seeking students and for students taking over 115% of the degree requirements of their major. Many universities responded and the Board evidently found these reports so different as to not allow a single
response. So they were ignored, even though they were, taken together, almost all opposed to the proposals. In any event, there was little desire to make a statement, but rather to monitor the process in the legislature and have the various lobbyists for the universities make their will known. I protested that an endorsement of the Governor’s plan was very harmful for many of our students who would not be able to continue their education or take the courses that they need. There was little support for my position, but Mike DeGrandy made a motion that would permit any university to petition the BOG for exemption due to hardship that such regulations would entail. I would note that the provisions in the House and Senate are evolving (the House Bill, for example, in its current form, does not penalize students who take over 115% but instead refuses to allocate any FTE funds to the universities for courses in excess of that amount). The fact is that 43% of students who enter our state universities as freshmen exceed 115%. This is because they are young and are seeking a course of study that meets both their needs, their abilities and their aptitudes. If this necessary process is short circuited, we will seriously harm our graduates and the lives of many students.

Quick fixes such as new rules that do not take into account the need for many students to change their majors or who find, at an early age, that their aptitude or vocation is changing or that see and treat non-degree seeking students as if they were not citizens of the State, are certain to result in serious harm to our students body and to our state; we need to move towards the overall well thought out and long term solutions proposed by the Council of 100.

7. Appropriations. With regard to overall funding of Higher Education, the Senate Bill to date funds enrollment growth and tracks the Governor’s budget, allowing a modest funding increase, while the House bill does not fund enrollment growth as it even foresees a 3.5% cut in funding, which would be disastrous to higher education in Florida. There is much more to come as it is early in the session.

Howard Rock
Member, Florida Board of Governors
Chair, Advisory Council of Faculty Senates
Professor of History, Florida International University