February 2015 Faculty President Report to the Board of Trustees

My October report focused on governance committees and some of their goals for the academic year. In this report, I focus on the faculty body. The core issues faculty face this year have not much changed since October. Each month, substantial time has been devoted to these core issues during the faculty meeting. Over the course of a semester of such meetings as well as less formal conversations, certain themes emerged.

Faculty appreciate the openness of the administration this semester. I received positive feedback regarding the sharing of the dashboards and academic indicators in November. The brown-bag budget sessions run by Dr. Hastad through early December were well attended.

Faculty remain committed to participating in the workings of the university, particularly in the areas of curriculum and governance. Topics discussed at faculty meetings include course minimum sizes (still a hot issue for many faculty), course cancellation timelines, the proper balance between major credits and elective credits, and suggested assessment pieces for the ranking/prioritization/evaluation now being carried out by the administration. The Faculty Executive Committee has communicated our recommendations regarding these issues to the administration. We have come to agreement regarding the course cancellation timeline. The suggested assessment pieces have been included in the ranking/prioritization/evaluation process. We recently received administrative feedback regarding the balance between major and elective credits and have communicated that to faculty. The Faculty Executive Committee is concerned that what started as recommendations and guidelines on our part has become a mandate for all non-externally-accredited programs. In order to be sure governance processes are followed, the next step should be to present this to ASC for consideration.

Trained to analyze and critically evaluate just about everything, faculty find it difficult to support projects with unclear goals or outcomes. The ranking/prioritization/evaluation of programs would be an example of such a project. Much data have been gathered, but faculty as a whole still do not know how the data will be analyzed. FEC is working with the Provost to understand the criteria feeding into an evaluative template and its scoring mechanism. What happens at the conclusion of this exercise is also unknown to faculty. Understandably concerned for their programs and their positions, faculty have asked for information regarding the steps after the data gathering process.

In the midst of these more global concerns, faculty continue to offer best efforts in the classroom, in scholarly activity, and in service. New programs have been approved in Music Therapy and Aviation. Many programs have completed a review of their requirements. “Old” issues including development and offering of CCEs, assessment of the Pioneer Core, budget issues, and the construction of the new science center remain in the faculty focus as well. Faculty continue to publish, present, collaborate, create, and innovate.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Lampe, Faculty President