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Building and Grounds Committee Meeting Minutes, February 25, 2008

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MINUTES
Faculty Senate University Building and Grounds Committee
February 25, 2008
12:30 – 2:30 p.m.
110 Rike Hall

Committee Members in Attendance: Joseph Petrick, Chair, James Amon, Huntting Brown, Vicky Davidson, Jeff Gardner, Cynthia King, Yi-Hui Lee, Richelle O'Connor, Arnab Shaw, William Taylor

Meeting Purpose: Joseph Petrick opened the meeting by pointing to its primary purpose: to facilitate more cross-functional campus sharing of information regarding opportunities for improvement in addressing buildings and grounds issues.

University Buildings & Grounds Stakeholder Survey Detailed Analysis: James Amon provided a detailed analysis of specific questions from the 2007 University Building and Grounds survey.

(Questions 6-22: Overview of Faculty Concerns)

Detailed analysis will show that 50 of the 251 faculty responding were adjunct faculty. Since these faculty members are not on campus as regularly as non-adjuncts, I suspect their views may differ. Our students who are seniors, though outnumbered by freshmen gave a better response and perhaps their views represent the most mature and informed student group. Many questions generated strong agreement with the notion presented, others presented a mixed bag. As a committee we need to tell the administration where we see problems or at least potential problems.

Questions 6-9: Classroom Furnishings

Most agree that classroom design is important and that it needs to be flexible and over half want a movable teaching station. Most are satisfied with the permanent parts (Question 9) of the classrooms. I do see reason to dig deeper into the response to question 9. We should ask which College the respondents belong to if they were in the lower tier answers. It may be that we can find a group that has special needs. It is obvious that the need for movable teaching station needs to be addressed even though it represents some difficult implementation problems.

Questions 10 -12: Lighting

Significant numbers of respondents are not fully satisfied with lighting and nearly all agree that this topic is strongly important. The university needs to investigate how lighting controls can be made better.

Question 13 - 14: Present and Future Classroom Aids

Most items listed seemed to be desirable by a large number of respondents. I found it notable that chalkboards are still important and that only a few seem to need a portable digital projector. Question 14 addressed quite a few items that are just beginning to be possible at WSU. Smartboards were quite popular and from what I have seen of them could be the most important advance we have made recently. Interaction between student and faculty seems to be a major factor desired. It would be interesting to see if this is true across all colleges or it peaks in one or more.

Questions 15 - 18: Means to Project/Display Visual Materials

It appears that in spite of digital projection abilities, faculty still like to write on the "walls" but they are mostly neutral when asked if they want more projectors. Since 26% are in favor of multiple projectors, we need to suggest that the university see where multiple projectors would be most used. Upgrading some classrooms with additional writing surfaces seems like a good idea. The ability to point the projector somewhere else was supported but somewhat weakly. Strong responses indicate the whiteboards are not a substitute for a good quality standard projection screen.

Questions 19 - 20: Selected Computer Issues:

Most agree that the electronic classrooms are intuitive and easy to use but 22% did not agree and that is a significant proportion (56 of 251) of our faculty. We need to find out if this is college associated or generic and we need to ask the University to fix the problem. Perhaps the question needs to be expanded. In question 20 it is clear that laptop computers for faculty is highly desirable. I would guess that this would enable faculty to bring specific items to the classroom in an easily useful format. Specific programs could be used and mass storage of reference material could conceivably be at faculty fingertips.

Question 21: Who Do You Call For Help?

Most seem to know who to call for help but there were 57 individual comments on this question so we need to see those to find out why they were so vocal.

Question 22: Training

Most want printed instructions as the first choice of training. the second choice was phone help and the last was a training session. Obviously, training sessions limit access because they need to be scheduled and printed instructions can be posted or filed for later reference. In my experience the printed instructions go out of date quickly so phone-assistance is my usual fall-back position, but I hear lots of grumbling about all choices. CTL and CATS seem to be always trying to improve but the technology moves very fast and is hard to keep up with. In my classroom this quarter I frequently have to play with the computer or projector to get it to really work - but there is no pattern to it. Perhaps the opportunity to update instructional sheets and/or specific training sessions offered within colleges would be beneficial.

Question 23: Classroom Crowding

This looks like a serious problem. Although 32% see little crowding the other 68 % do see crowding and that is not acceptable. 2096 people responded to this question so I think

we need to pay attention.

Question 24 - 25: Classroom and Location near Faculty Offices

Students and faculty seem to like the idea of keeping classes and faculty offices close together. Note that 299 Faculty respondents said not applicable - I believe these may have been Staff responses. There is a tradeoff here in terms of efficient utilization of space but college identity and convenience are valued priorities. Concerns about assigned classrooms can and should be addressed prior to the beginning of the instructional term. Information regarding the key contact persons in each college for classroom scheduling issues needs to be more widely disseminated so that proper, efficient channels of communication, prior the instructional term, can be more routinely utilized.

Question 26: Should Students Have Microphones For Responding?

With 2092 responses here, we need to break this down into faculty and student groupings for interpretation - without that it is too vague.

Question 27: Classroom Design By Classroom Type

Across all classroom types the answer was, in general, 61-80 of classrooms are appropriately designed. Again it may be well to break that down by type of respondent. For example, I would like to see the responses of seniors by college and faculty by college.

Questions 28 - 39: Classroom Features

Electrical outlets at desks, movable desks and chairs, good interior design, furniture design, and function all seem to be needs with which the users agree. The classrooms are generally clean and ready for teaching when students and faculty arrive. Appropriateness of the furniture, repair status and comfort met with some negative responses. Since 38% said they thought the seating was uncomfortable we need to address that problem with high priority. 38% of respondents also found the design of classrooms lacking when they considered how late arriving student would disrupt the learning experiences. That is too many. Another problem is that the screens are often not fully visible and 22% were not happy with this situation. Many flat classrooms have this problem and it is possible to aim the projectors higher and often they can be hung a foot or more higher to help the situation. A slightly smaller image on the screen might suffice in some smaller classrooms - it is better to see it small than not at all! Finally nearly a third of the respondents recognized that there is not enough space for classrooms, labs and studios at WSU. This question had 475 written responses that need to be addressed.

Question 40: Off-Campus Trips

With 284 written responses, I was impressed by the level of response to this question. 53% said off campus/out of the classroom activities were important. This means that part of our classrooms are elsewhere and we may need to think about how we can improve those experiences too. Transportation may be a large concern. The need to find parking when returning is also a concern.

Question 41: Restrooms

Most are happy with the quantity and quality of the locations

Question 42: Bulletin Boards

I think electronic bulletin boards are becoming more important and we need to plan for the infrastructure to support them.

Question 43 – 44: Temperature

People seem to like 70 to 72 degrees F. From an economic standpoint, I think a warmer summer temperature might be good but it may be informative to see if the response varies with the interest groups polled.

Question 45 – 47: Communication

Cell phones seem to work fairly well in diverse university locations and from personal experience I can see recent improvements. Most people get a timely response to trouble calls; offices respond well too.

Question 48 - 49: Recycling

I was pleased to see 91% support recycling efforts & only 2% do not. 67% even want the university to fund enhancement of the effort. This effort needs to be coordinated with the Campus Sustainability Coordinator, Mr. Brown.

Question 50: Noise

Classroom noise is a problem for 34% and that is a problem that must be addressed. Again, noise pollution can be viewed also as a campus sustainability issue.

Question 51-52: Extracurricular Facilities

In general 77% think we have good leisure time activities and lounge space (67%) but those figures are still a little low. I would like to see suggestions as to how that can be improved. The new facilities at the Student Union have been finished since the survey and that could greatly change the outcome.

Question 53: Meeting Space

I think 28% being unable to find space is not acceptable. I wonder if an on-line finder might be initiated. Again, coordination with the Office of the Registrar to identify responsible parties who control information regarding all designated/discretionary use of campus space and public posting of that information might facilitate access to more meeting space on a timely basis.

Question 54: Campus Safety

While 78% do feel safe on campus, I would like to know what groups do not feel that way. We need to address their concerns. While we can't assure 100% safety we should be able to make WSU people feel they are in a maximally safe place. The new emergency campus-wide notification system is a step in the right direction.

Office of the Registrar Room Scheduling Update: Jeff Gardner provided a detailed update on the following topics: increased demand for computer labs; wireless access to Internet not available for teaching in some classrooms; requested conversion of 495 Millett to office space by Dean Taylor; moving classrooms out of less desirable classroom spaces; moving classrooms when capacity caps are exceeded; furniture movement between classrooms; and Ad Astra optimization. In addition, he provided statistic on campus wide classroom utilization and latest figures on Rike Hall space utilization.

Opportunities for sharing information among the Office of the Registrar and other campus functional representatives on the committee was discussed.

WSU University Sustainability & AASHE: Hunting Brown, the new WSU Director of Sustainability, offered an update on WSU's sustainability efforts and discussed the importance of WSU membership in the American Association for Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for addressing buildings and grounds' issues.

Opportunities for sharing information among the Office of the Director of Sustainability and other campus functional representatives on the committee was discussed.

Campus Transportation Alternatives: Richele O'Connor and Ed Gemin discussed one campus sustainability activity - expanding campus initiatives and resources related to the use of bicycles on campus by all stakeholders. Options discussed included: storing bikes, which does not include a lot of bike racks, also a sheltered pedestrian bridge over crosswalk locations; assessment and improvement of current bike paths. The student representative, Will Taylor, expressed some student interest in pursuing this option.

Opportunities for sharing information among the Office of the Director of Sustainability, the WSU Student Government and other campus functional representatives on the committee was discussed.

Meeting Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.