

30 October 2006

Professor Jack Rossmann, Chair  
Visiting Team to Wartburg College  
Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association

Dear Professor Rossmann:

On September 1, we asked President Ohle's office to inform you that we were interested in meeting with the visiting team during its time on campus. While we hope that we will indeed be able to get together, we recognize that your busy schedule may preclude such an opportunity. Whether a meeting takes place or not, however, the chapter has agreed that we should provide you with these written comments. In the interests of transparency and openness, they have also been published in our newsletter and on our website.

Having grown steadily since its reconstitution in 1992, Wartburg AAUP today includes more than half the full-time teaching faculty. If you were to visit our website (<http://home.mchsi.com/~wartburgaaup/>), you would see that for the last fifteen years the chapter has been continuously active in campus affairs, especially when events have challenged AAUP principles related to shared governance, peer review, due process, and academic freedom.

With these principles in mind and with the hope of contributing to an honest self-evaluation—the basis of any effective reaccreditation process—we respectfully offer the following observations and suggestions on topics of concern to our members:

**1. Governance Issues.** The chapter shares the concerns expressed on pages 35-37 of the self-study report, especially those regarding (a) “administrative interference in and disregard for faculty actions” in areas where faculty traditionally have exercised primary responsibility, (b) the administration's creation of various bodies to perform tasks that fall under the purview of existing faculty committees, and (c) the lack of meaningful faculty participation in decision-making related to budget and institutional long-range planning (see also item 3).

An additional governance issue not noted in the self-study is a pattern of administrative disregard for policies and procedures contained in the faculty handbook. For documentation, please refer to material posted on the “Issues” page of the chapter website—especially material related to the 2000-2001 music education search, to recent attempts to fill the Saemann Chair, and to last year's decision to build the Wartburg-Waverly Wellness Center.

**2. Potential Governance Solutions.** Though it is not clear that the primary causes of our governance problems are structural, one organizational change that could move our governance structure closer to the ideal expressed in the AAUP's 1966 *Statement on Government* is the establishment of a faculty senate. A senate, we believe, would more clearly delineate and separate the areas of responsibility belonging to faculty. A senate would provide a more efficient forum for decision-making than plenary faculty meetings, which have become increasingly cumbersome as the faculty has become larger. And a senate would provide the faculty with elected officers who can speak for the faculty.

Another structural change that we think would enhance the quality of shared governance is the creation of a faculty-board conference committee. On page 33 of the self-study, the authors note the improvement in communication brought about by adding vice presidents to board committees. Regrettably, there has been no parallel progress in finding ways to improve the board's communication with faculty, who have very limited contact, formal or informal, with the Regents. We think that the board should reconsider Faculty Council's February 2004 recommendation (endorsed by the chapter) that the board establish a faculty-board conference committee to effect regular, unmediated conversation between faculty and Regents. For more details, please see <<http://home.mchsi.com/~wartburgaaup/issues.html#board>>.

**3. Commission Wartburg.** Recognizing that our continuing success depends on the college's remaining attractive to high-school graduates who are encountering increasingly alluring alternatives, we are grateful to President Ohle and the regents for the remarkable accomplishments in fund-raising and facilities improvement they have realized under the banner of Commission and Campaign Wartburg. Even so, we still must question the self-study's characterization of the commission as a long-range strategic-planning process. The Harvard case study,<sup>1</sup> the commission documents posted on the college's website, and the campaign's marketing brochures indicate that the commission's real purpose was not to engage key governance components in a process of careful planning but instead to cultivate potential donors who could help fund the ambitious building projects that the board and president had already decided to undertake. For this reason, the commission process was designed to exclude faculty members from any meaningful role in developing the 266 recommendations that provided the impetus for the ensuing campaign.<sup>2</sup> Reporting to the board at its most recent meeting, the chair of Faculty Council recommended that, post-commission, the board and administration should include faculty as "active participants in whatever strategic planning and initiatives constitute the next phase of [the college's] history," a recommendation the chapter would certainly endorse.

**4. Faculty Compensation.** We believe that academic quality depends on a college's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty members. We therefore find it remarkable that the self-study contains no analysis of faculty compensation. Our analysis of data submitted by the college to the federal government and to the AAUP over the last eight years reveals strikingly lower gains in average annual compensation at the rank of associate and, especially, professor—in relation both to the lower ranks and to the same ranks at comparable (IIB) institutions (see attached table). We hope that the college is taking adequate steps to address this issue.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration as you help the college evaluate its efforts to improve student learning. We look forward to reading your report.

Sincerely,

Gregory Scholtz  
President

Josef Breutzmann  
Vice-President

Paul Hedeem  
Treasurer

Paula Survilla  
Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> Jared Bleak, *Campaign Wartburg* (Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2002). We highly recommend this detailed, impartial, and perceptive account of the origin and conception of Campaign Wartburg.

<sup>2</sup> On page 37 of the self-study, the authors note, "As stated in the *Harvard Case Study, Commission Wartburg* was purposely designed to include faculty input only in the ranking process after recommendations were made, and in the ranking process, faculty represented only one of many constituencies consulted." Not mentioned is the fact that the administration invited this "faculty input" electronically during the summer when most faculty were not in their offices.