

16 February 2004

Mr. Fred Hagemann, Chair
Wartburg College Board of Regents
1406 Cedar River Drive
Waverly, IA 50677

Dear Mr. Hagemann:

We, the undersigned officers of the Wartburg chapter of the American Association of University Professors, are writing to endorse Faculty Council's recommendation that the Board of Regents establish a board-faculty conference (or liaison) committee. This recommendation is contained in the strategic-planning memorandum that Faculty Council has prepared, at your request, for the board's meeting in Florida this weekend.

As Faculty Council has indicated in its memorandum, efficient decision-making, especially in the realm of long-range strategic planning, requires effective communication between all segments of the campus community. But the existing structures for board-faculty conversation, such as Faculty Council reports at board lunches or presidential reports on board actions to the faculty, have not kept pace with the college's remarkable development in other areas. In recognition of this fact, President Ohle himself has frequently voiced his interest in establishing additional avenues for communication between the faculty and the Board of Regents. Indeed, President Ohle has been advocating for improved board-faculty communication since he first came to Wartburg College in 1998.

There are several structural options that colleges typically employ to effect substantive communication between the faculty and the governing board: (1) a standing liaison (or conference) committee, (2) elected faculty representatives on the governing board, (3) elected faculty representatives on board committees. (For a fuller discussion of the most pertinent issues and principles related to faculty-board communication, see the enclosed "Crossing the Great Divide: Enhancing Faculty-Trustee Communication," an article published in the October issue of Emory University's *Academic Exchange*.)

However, it is the first option—a small standing committee of board members and elected faculty representatives that meets regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern—that appears to be the most effective for substantive, unmediated conversations between faculty and board members (sample formulations from the faculty handbooks of St. Olaf and the College of Wooster are enclosed). Therefore, it is the standing board-faculty liaison (or conference) committee that the Faculty Council

recommends in its memorandum, and it is this same structure that we also are strongly endorsing.

Colleges that employ board-faculty liaison committees have found that frank, educative, and productive discussions are most likely to occur when three or four elected faculty representatives meet with three or four board members. A conference committee also seems to make the most efficient use of members' time, since the committee's only business is to discuss matters of mutual concern.

For these reasons, we hope that you will give Faculty Council's recommendation your thoughtful consideration as you plan for the college's future during your meeting this weekend.

On behalf of the fifty-five members of the Wartburg chapter of the AAUP, we extend our best wishes for a productive meeting and our gratitude for the work, wealth, and wisdom that the members of the Board of Regents have contributed to the continuing welfare and academic excellence of Wartburg College.

Sincerely,

Gregory Scholtz
President

Paul Hedeem
Vice President

Paula Survilla
Secretary

Josef Breutzmann
Treasurer

enclosures

cc: Board of Regents, Wartburg College