



"Committed to Academic Excellence"

NEWSLETTER

November 16, 2010

BOARD MEMBER RACHEL RIENSCHÉ ADDRESSES FALL AAUP DINNER

On Friday, October 1, Ms. Rachel Riensché, Vice Chair of the Wartburg College Board of Regents, spoke to the AAUP on *Hallmarks of Effective Board-Faculty Relationships*. Her comments drew upon a January 2010 report released by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). The report, *Faculty, Governing Boards and Institutional Governance*, was part of the TIAA-CREF Institute-funded Project on Faculty and Institutional Governance. It focused on governance at the institutional level where faculty and a board are most likely to interact.

Ms. Riensché focused on three qualities of the relationship between the board and the faculty that the AGB study cited as essential to the health of a college: understanding, communication, and respect. She noted that faculty members often misunderstand the role of the board. Similarly, board members do not typically understand well the duties of the faculty or its role in institutional governance. Indeed, the AGB study noted that only 23% of faculty and board members surveyed said they had a good grasp of the duties of the other body.

Riensché provided an overview of the legal responsibilities of a board, including its fiduciary duties. She noted that board-faculty interaction is a source of additional clarity about the duties of each body, and that the AGB report recognizes the value of both substantive and social interactions. Official board-faculty communications have typically been at social events, academic ceremonies, and through formal announcements (e.g., promotion, tenure and emeriti faculty appointments). More substantive interaction occurs in presidential searches and faculty presentations to the board. She noted that the Wartburg board has exposure to curricular issues, mechanisms of faculty governance, and faculty responsibilities in the classroom via reports to the board's Committee on Academic Affairs.

Riensché commented that recent examples of communication between board and faculty members included serving on the presidential search committee and on Commission on Mission task forces, where one board member and several faculty members worked together. Also growing out of the task forces was an increased level of mutual respect. She noted, however, that continued growth in understanding, communication and respect require sustained effort. The board's Academic Affairs committee, now chaired by former Wartburg professor Liz Mathis, and the Committee on Board Affairs will be especially sensitive to nurturing "regular and rigorous conversations" between the board and faculty in the coming years. Riensché invited faculty to discuss with her, Liz or any board member ideas for communication opportunities. "If we all think creatively about the shape and structure of board-faculty communication, we will find some models...that are uniquely valuable for addressing the challenges that are sure to come our way."

The full AGB report can be found on the AGB website: <http://agb.org> (search for Faculty Governing Boards and Institutional Governance). The January 2010 AGB press release summarizing the report can be found at: <http://www.agb.org/news/2010-01/new-research-released-faculty-governing-boards-and-institutional-governance>.

IN IOWA, WARTBURG IS VERY COMPETITIVE

The September 2010 issue of *U. S. News & World Report* is dedicated to rankings of “best colleges.” One interesting ranking category was “A+ Schools for B Students.” This ranking was directed to students “trapped in the GPA of a B student and ... set on [attending] a top college.” *U. S. News* noted that there’s hope for such students and identified schools where “non-superstars have a decent shot at being accepted.”

The Iowa schools tabulated below were listed among 160 national universities and national liberal arts colleges. All tabulated data are for the year 2009. To be eligible for this list, national universities and liberal arts colleges had to be among the top three quarters of their peer groups in the 2011 Best Colleges rankings and had to admit a meaningful proportion of non-A students as indicated by 2009 composite ACT scores and high school class standing.

<u>Iowa Institution</u>	<u>ACT 25-75 % Range</u>	<u>Av. H.S. GPA</u>	<u>Percent 1st Year Students in Top Quartile of H. S. Class</u>
Central	21-27	3.5	54
Coe	23-28	3.7	61
Cornell	24-29	3.5	57
Drake	24-29	3.6	70
Iowa	23-28	3.6	55
Iowa State	22-28	3.5	62
Luther	23-29	3.6	64
Northern Iowa	21-26	3.4	49
Simpson	21-27	—	61
Wartburg	21-27	3.5	56

So what distinguishes Wartburg from other Iowa institutions, particularly Central, Luther, Simpson and UNI, our chief competitors for students interested in Wartburg? It must be Wartburg’s special opportunities and programs: study-abroad recognition, leadership certificate program (e.g., Jeanzabar Foundation’s Student Leadership Award), community engagement program (Washington Center’s Higher Education Civic Engagement Award and the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship), service trips (top ranking by Break Away service organization), and co-curricular programs such as athletics (national All-Sport ranking) and music (choir trips to Europe and South Africa).

PROGRESS REPORT TO THE HLC GOOD NEWS!

President Colson’s progress report to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which was due November 1st, 2010, is very good news for the Wartburg community. The report, “required as a result of the 2006 comprehensive evaluation of Wartburg College,” was to provide information for “the previous three academic years related to enrollment, retention, and net tuition revenue, as well as a detailed report ... [on] the financial projections of the Wellness Center.”

Enrollments for fiscal years 2007–2009 “have been stable [1799–1810], retention has been strong [83.1–86.7 %] and net tuition revenue has increased [from \$ 22.7 million to \$24.7 million dollars].”

Revenue associated with the W come (1) from the college, (2) from memberships, and (3) from Waverly Light and Power (WLP) and the City of Waverly. WLP is bound

to provide \$150,000 annually through May 31st, 2022, and the City, \$120,000 annually through May 31st, 2015. In addition, the City promised a “contingent obligation” of \$600,000 annually through May 31st, 2016, in the event that income were to fall short of projections (November 16th, 2005 Wellness Center Development and Use Agreement). In the progress report, President Colson noted these WLP and City payments have been made regularly.

The other good news is that total W revenues are up from \$643,000 in 2008-09 to \$804,000 in 2009-10. Community memberships for these two years make up 72 % and 64 % of those totals, respectively. W members, excluding students, have increased from 1751 in fall 2008 to 2115 in fall 2010. These numbers exceed the standard set in early projections that approximately 1900 community memberships at \$600 per year would be needed to sustain the W (December 8th, 2005 Fitch Ratings on Series 2005B bonds).

Wartburg faculty members are grateful to President Colson for sharing the HLC report with them.

INSTITUTIONAL NEED OR PROGRAM REDUCTION?

In his recent report on the Board of Regents meeting, President Colson fulfilled his promise to release the full text of the required progress report to the Higher Learning Commission. The HLC report underlined Wartburg’s financial strength in a number of areas. Full-time enrollments were stable, net tuition revenues looked good, the college’s endowment is up 7.3% from last year, and donations to the annual fund amounted to just over a million dollars, 10.5% more than the previous year. In the final budget for 2010-11, the Board included a \$100,000 pool to increase employees’ base pay beginning in January 2011. As the president noted, the increase “won’t go far,” but it demonstrates the board’s commitment to the people who most directly implement the mission of the college and represents progress—along with the restoration of the college’s 8% contribution to the pension plan—towards reinstating regular and meaningful increases in compensation.

In light of this progress, recent actions by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty appear questionable. Last year the Dean initiated a review of four faculty positions under the rubric of the institutional need process (see *Faculty Handbook* [FH] 2.7.6.1 and 2.2.5.5). She cited a tight institutional financial environment as a primary warrant for this review. All four positions were held by non-tenured faculty. One position was discontinued at the end of this year. Another was affirmed by FC, but in the end was converted from a tenure-track to a term appointment. The remaining two positions were continued as originally configured.

Then this year in September, three one-person *programs* were selected by the Dean for review. All three faculty in charge of these programs were tenured. It was unclear whether the reviews were to be governed by the Handbook’s institutional need process or by its program review process; these are significantly different processes (see FH, 2.7.6.1 and 2.10.5.3). But before the three positions could be reviewed by FC, the Dean withdrew her call for the reviews.

Although the threat to faculty positions and academic programs has evaporated, questions remain. Was there ever a bone fide financial exigency that warranted a reduction in force? Were academic programs threatened because of a clearly defined change in institutional need? Are measures of institutional need consistently applied, transparent and defensible, given the stated warrants? The Dean cited the size of the threatened programs as a reason for reviewing them, raising the question whether the number of majors and minors in a program is the primary or determining criterion for retaining a program. If so, how and why are student contact units used to determine

which faculty and programs to keep? The larger and perhaps most important question is, what programs are essential to the identity of a liberal arts college such as Wartburg, particularly in light of the new strategic plan?

Based on the favorable financial data noted above, program reduction can hardly be warranted by assertions of financial exigency (FH, 2.10.5.3.1). And the Handbook clearly states that formal discontinuance of a program “shall occur only after a program review has been conducted by the FC, a recommendation submitted to the faculty *for their action* [italics mine], and approval is given by the College President” (FH, 2.10.5.3.7.2.a.). Faculty should bear in mind that the Dean is not empowered to eliminate selected programs without significant faculty input and due process.

—Warren T. Zemke

EVALUATION OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

On November 1st the four officers of the Wartburg Chapter of the AAUP (W. Zemke, R. Blair, B. Jones and M. P. Survilla) sent a letter to President Colson requesting the evaluation of Dr. Ferol Menzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs. The letter read in part, “A faculty review of the VPAA performance was put on hold with the transition to a new president. We think the review is now long overdue and encourage you to conduct such a review this year.”

The letter identified two AAUP documents that contain recommended standards relating to faculty participation in the evaluation of administrators: the 1981 statement on *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators*, and the 2006 report *Faculty Evaluation of Administrators*. Three recommendations from the latter report were highlighted:

1. “... the review should be entrusted to ART whose members are elected by the faculty.”
2. “The evaluation should ensure ‘a wide spectrum of faculty participation’ by giving all faculty the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire ...”
3. “Some sort of report of the evaluation should be issued ... [to ART]”

Members of the Appointment Rank and Tenure Committee, Faculty Council and AAUP received copies of the letter.

Editor’s note: All members of the Wartburg faculty, not just AAUP members, are invited to make contributions to the newsletter. Submit contributions to the editor, Brian Jones, at brian.jones@wartburg.edu.