

SECTION: 15

DATE:

December 16, 2010

BOARD OF REGENTS
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATION

MONTHLY REPORT
FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ACTION REQUESTED

It is requested that the Faculty Affairs Committee Agenda for December 16, 2010 be received and placed on file and the Minutes of the October 19, 2010 meeting be received and placed on file.

STAFF SUMMARY

The topic for the December 16, 2010 Faculty Affairs Committee meeting will be the Impact of Government Changes on Academic Programs.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fiscal impact.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

The proposed action has been reviewed and is recommended for Board approval.

University Executive Officer
Provost and Executive Vice President

12-7-2010

Date

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Board of Regents

Faculty Affairs Committee

December 16, 2010

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.

205 Welch Hall

AGENDA

Regular Agenda

Section 15 Monthly Report and Minutes (*Regent Parker, Chair*)

Status Report

Discussion: “Impact of Government Changes on Academic Programs”

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF REGENTS

FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 19, 2010
12:45-1:30 p.m.
205 Welch Hall

Attendees (seated at tables): M. Bombyk, H. Bunsis, M. Evett, M. Higbee, Provost and Executive Vice President Kay, L. Lee, S. Moeller, R. Neely, Regent Parker (Chair), M. Rahman, K. Rusiniak, Regent Sidlik.

Guests (as signed in): M. Bombyk, B. Bond, J. Carroll, D. deLaski-Smith, A. Dow, M. Evett, K. Freedman-Doan, C. Foreman, M. Higbee, S. Kersey Otto, L. Lee, A. Meyer, R. Nord, M. Rahman, D. Ritzenhein, K. Rusiniak, C. Shell, W. Tornquist, T. Venner, B. Warren.

Presentation: "The Role of Eastern Michigan University as a Comprehensive University in These Challenging Times"

Ken Rusiniak, Professor of Psychology, shared his views on "The Role of Eastern Michigan University as a Comprehensive University in These Challenging Times". Dr. Rusiniak's prospective on this issue draws from his participation in the AAUP and its mission. He believes there are three questions needing answers; who are we?, where are we going?, and how are we going to get there?

Who are we can be rephrased as what is a university? A university is tenure track faculty with academic freedom. It is people and programs sharing a common purpose, telling sense from nonsense. We are also trained in different academic disciplines with different skills and knowledge bases.

Where are we going? There's a very old and long-standing debate about universities; whether we exist to discover new knowledge or whether we exist to serve students. Eastern has long taken pride in placing a balance between these two functions. Could it be that such a balance is not in our best interest? One measure of academic success is the Carnegie Classification Scheme. Eastern isn't recognized at the same level as most Michigan public universities, and whether this is a valid measurement or not, it is felt as valid internally. They also factor into how others view the university as an academic institution. This has to taken seriously as we consider how we are going to move forward. Universities are also challenged to give back to the community in substantive ways, to the educational systems, to the health care systems, to our social support and economic systems. We have collaborative institutes and projects between public and private sectors, which may be playing a more important role in the future. Most importantly for our current situation in Michigan, people and the state are looking to the universities to train and change our workforce. So our tenure track faculty have relevance and significance to the community and to the state. It's up to us, however, to make that case. That's where we have some issues.

How will we get to where we are going? There are a couple of very broad-brush strokes that we need to recognize. One is that the educational system in Michigan is really set up to be competitive not collaborative. Our funding is a highly political process in Lansing and from what I understand; the opinion in Lansing is pretty stereotyped. How we handle those things has to do with three sorts of efforts on our part. This is my personal view. One is diversification, second is political advocacy, and third is what's called translational efforts. I think having a broad range of programs with competent tenure track faculty is essential and that includes programs that involve social and community giveback. Some of our institutes do that, we have many grants that are already doing that. I think we are in a pretty good position with some of those. I think it would behoove us to have conditions that would allow us to compete more effectively for alternative revenue, meaning grants and contracts. Collaborations which we

already have with other institutions play a significant roll. I can't say it enough that I believe political advocacy in Lansing is something we need to do better, in these changing times in particular. Every university that has done well has typically has had a strong advocate in Lansing. Over the last 20 years, if you look at other Michigan public universities, all of their increases in revenue streams have been tied to strong political advocacy in Lansing. The final efforts need to be translational. In the sciences we often talk about translational research, that the language of science is translated into a form that other agencies can understand. I think that's another area where, to be effective, we need to make some improvements. Just like the political advocacy in Lansing, the language of academics is not always obvious to others outside of our discipline. These are some of my views about broad stroke of what we are as a university and some of the challenges. I'd be interested in hearing what others have to say.

Regent Parker thanked Professor Rusiniak for his comments, particularly those about research and what it brings to the academic mission.

Professor Rusiniak continue by stating that research is one of Eastern's strengths, using research to teach students about the educational mission, and it involves tenure track faculty with the students. It isn't always the case with some of the other universities.

Regent Parker shared her view on political advocacy in Lansing. It is critical to Eastern. But it isn't just access to Lansing and its policy makers; it's also critical they know about Eastern. We have an opportunity to be much more aggressive in our outreach, and it should have faculty involved in it.

Professor Rusiniak brought up the topic of consolidating the universities, as they do in other states. Regent Sidlik explained that this would require a constitutional change in Michigan. It's not easy to do, and many state schools would protest. He went on with the analogy - if you believe in one central system controlled by legislators, do you like Michigan roads? He also asked why the California and New York schools are not as great as some of the schools here in Michigan? There has to be a healthy balance between cooperation and competition.

Matthew Evett, President of Faculty Council and Professor, Computer Science, continued the discussion with his concerns regarding Lansing and Michigan's fiscal outlook. Because this will lead to additional cuts in higher education, it falls on the faculty and leadership of the state universities to continue to explain why comprehensive universities are critical to the future of Michigan. The old state economy is dead. Heavy industry on its own can no longer support us. We must move to a new economy, one that features technology, small businesses, agility and continual innovation. Higher education is critical to this shift. We must educate our young to be workers in the new economy, and we must re-educate our laid-off workers to make them readily employable again. Two factors make EMU's role in Michigan's future especially important; its location and our particular mission. Eastern is located in the heart of the automotive industry. As to our mission, Eastern has always served the underserved, and has been for years. Eastern already knows how to retrain workers; we've been doing it for years. Eastern's faculty is essential to our ability to succeed in this environment. Our students are at a much higher risk of dropping out than those at U of M, but our tenure track faculty teaches a much larger percentage of the school's courses than as happens in Lansing or Ann Arbor. Part-time lecturers or graduate students will much less frequently teach our students. In closing, comprehensive universities have an indispensable role in the movement of our state into a new economy. The faculty at Eastern Michigan are experienced and trained and ready to meet that challenge.

Regent Parker remarked that economics is the foremost consideration of families when choosing a school for their children. She also stressed the importance of the school's mission to its relevancy.

Jack Kay, *Provost and Executive Vice President*, opened his remarks expressing his appreciation to Dr. Rusiniak and Dr. Evett for their focus on mission because mission is the starting point. Because he believes in Eastern's mission, it was one of the reasons he was attracted to coming to Eastern Michigan. He proceeded with a definition of a comprehensive university by discussing a 1995 article written by a former head of the Department of English and Professor of English at Eastern Michigan, Marsha Dalbey. She was writing in 1995 in the Association of the Departments of English bulletin in an article that is titled "What is a Comprehensive University and Do I Really Want to Work There?" She discusses the composition of the student body, their views on education, and the resources needed to sustain these students' interest and enthusiasm. These resources are commitment to a broad based, democratic philosophy of education, active belief that less privileged and less prepared students have the same rights to excellent instruction, genuine love of teaching, and flexibility of imagination. Dr. Darby also discussed tensions including research versus teach and professional versus the liberal arts. Provost Kay explained that Eastern has done a remarkable job compared to other universities of reaching a balance.

In looking to the future, Provost Kay pointed out Eastern's growth is in its centers, and online education. He stated that part of the reason for the growth in these areas is the use of fulltime faculty. He concluded by conveying his belief that the dialogue must continue in order to sustain the balance, growth and adjust to the rapid changes.

Professor Rusiniak brought up the dilemma of translating what Eastern does best to funding from Lansing. Along those lines, Regent Parker asked how do we keep the core of the liberal arts mission buried in the programs, or at least an integral part of the programs? Professor Rusiniak offered the idea of consolidating programs to reduce duplication across the universities, but that poses its own problems of reducing diversification, and lack of choice for future students. This consolidation doesn't guarantee students will attend your school just because you have a program.

Professor Rusiniak added that students are not commodities or a product. They are growing. Two things happen in a University education, yes they get the product they have the degree, but they also have a University experience. Regent Parker remarked that education gives people skills to navigate life, not just a degree.

Professor Evett brought up the news report that Lansing is considering shifting the funding model for the universities to be more like the funding in Ohio, where the funding is based on graduation rate, and that it would hurt Eastern's student population. Regent Parker agreed that this would be detrimental to our students. She also stated that our students didn't leave the university because of dissatisfaction with it, but because of financial and personal challenges.

Mark Higbee, *Professor, Department of History and Philosophy*, added another major concern that will confront higher education in general, and EMU in particular, in the next period of years, and that's the increasing demand for accountability, or assessment tool, proof that there is learning. He cited Derek Bok's, *"Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More"* (Princeton University Press, 2005), which proved that for the amount of money we put into higher education, higher education doesn't do as much as it should. This is becoming a major factor in how families choose which colleges their children should attend. In addition to maintaining what Eastern does, it needs to do what it does, and do more, and do it better.

Most students that consider schools like Eastern are vocational oriented, primarily. Faculty tend to be oriented to students that are like themselves, who would be academics in the future. Most administrators are oriented to the collegiate students, who come to have a good time, go to the games. These are the three typology of undergrad students. Students at Eastern are way over-represented by the vocationally motivated. That makes sense, but Eastern's shouldn't structure its programs around vocational education.

Marty Bombyk, *Professor, Social Work*, expressed her concern about using enrollment growth as a major strategy for saving Eastern Michigan. She pointed out that if enrollment growth happens too quickly, there is a downside. How well can an academic program absorb huge spurts of enrollment growth? She cited her department's 17% enrollment growth, and explained that part-time faculty would teach 75% of their Winter Term classes. Another downside is classroom management. Professor Bombyk continued to explain the reasons for the large increase. It was due to program reputation, the desire of people to help others and personal recommendations from graduates of the program.

She also expressed the concern that if Eastern's students do not complete their degrees, they are still liable for the student loans they used while they were students, and that there aren't jobs in Michigan's economy. She stated that partnering with emerging cutting-edge industries in Michigan might be something Eastern should pursue.

Regent Parker thanked the contributors and those in attendance and adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robertta Goffeney, Administrative Secretary
Academic Affairs