

Minutes
Indiana University
PROVOST'S REPORT ON THE STATE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
BLOOMINGTON FACULTY COUNCIL
September 19, 2006
Moot Court Room, Law School
3:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

[Full Text of Provost's Report](#)

Question and Answer

MILLER: So we do have some time for questions. Raise your hand and I'll be happy to recognize you.

TERRY: Officially this is a meeting of the Bloomington Faculty Council?

MCROBBIE: That's right.

TERRY: My question would be with all of these task forces that you are creating, how can the work of those task forces be coordinated with the committees and work of the faculty council so that you can get appropriate faculty input into these groups?

MCROBBIE: I think without exception they are all faculty committees for a start. I think with the exception of the one that Roger is chairing, they are all chaired by vice faculty members, very distinguished faculty members many of who are in the room. The membership and the kind of expertise that is going to be required is going to vary quite a lot from committee to committee and they'll be for some of those committees -- some of this is moving pretty fast too -- because some of those committees I think it makes sense to plug in fairly closely to a number of the present BFC committees. For example, I think the committee that I've asked Ted Widlanski to chair, the Incubator Committee should obviously talk to and be work with the Research Affairs Committee as one example. Some of the other committees are still in the process of being formed. I know the chairs have all been identified but I want to put in place membership; some are pretty self-evident in terms of who needs to be on them. I can obviously work with the Agenda Committee to get some names where I need them for some of those committees. As you can see they are quite varied as well in terms of how they are constructed. I think in the case of the Humanities Building Committee there is a pre-existing committee that Tom Gieryn chaired last time and I think Tom is proposing that we use quite a few of the members from the previous committee on the new committee which I think is exactly right so that there is some continuity there as well. So that's the kind of way that it's going to be done. My goal is to try to get them all up and running by the end of the next month. I think a lot of the work that they have to do is going to take at least the rest of the semester and in some cases the rest of the academic year to do so the sooner we get them moving the better.

THIBOS: You mentioned corporate funding for research, which of course has a big impact on campus. But you didn't touch on the topic of corporate funding for the other important mission

of the university which is education; do you see what the scope at all for increasing funding from corporate sources for education at either the graduate or undergraduate level?

MCROBBIE: For particular companies and businesses, where there is specific need, where they really want to seed some area and try to get early access to graduates and so on. I think there's always the opportunity for that. My experience, which is fairly broad with working with companies all over the world, is that they've just gotten more and more targeted and it is getting harder and harder to get money of a more general character out of corporations. It was a lot easier 20 years ago than it is now to do. So I think trying to get funding to support research is where you can actually be more targeted in terms of what that funding is available for is an easier task than getting it for education but its not impossible and I think, without having details in my head, I'm pretty certain the Kelley school has a lot of quite successful initiatives where they have got external funding. I think Informatics may have as well, at least on a modest level in terms of supporting various kinds of fellowships and scholarships and things like that, which I think is all part of what you are describing, and I am sure there are other schools.

MCCORMICK: You mentioned the increased role in internationalization. Basically since 2000, we've spent pretty much a moratorium on development of any kind of distributed education models on this campus. The discussion pretty much disappeared. Do you see any role for beginning this discussion again?

MCROBBIE: Absolutely, as soon as we're successful on getting a new Dean for School of Continuing Studies that will be a key role that I expect that person to undertake. I think it's fair to say that is an area where there have been, sort of, inflated hyped up expectations of what can happen. And there has not been just one bubble burst but successive bubbles burst in that area. As tends to be the case, bubbles burst and incremental progress has been made and bubbles burst again and so on. I think that its time to look at it. We've tried, I know Blaise just left, but Blaise chaired a committee that I think put a report in, gees must have been 7 years ago now, something like that and that report as I remember it, recommended charting a sort of a middle course. I think that was relatively wise actually. So we didn't massively extend ourselves in terms of the investments we made in this areas, unlike other places but nor did we do absolutely nothing. But for a variety of reasons I think you're right I think a lot of the sting has gone out of this area and I think it really is time to seriously revisit it.

BUCUR-DECKARD: I want to ask something about this visionary cinema and tie it to Ballantine Hall if I may. We all laughed when you talked about air conditioning in Ballantine Hall and I'm not referring to our offices, which for better or worse we can work in the library or at home. I'm talking about the teaching environment. I teach all my classes and I'm sure a lot of us who are in the humanities teach in Ballantine Hall floors one to three. During the summer, air conditioning is turned off and I don't know in what order but there were classes being offered during the day. Foreign Language classes, our students are supposed to be taking as part of their general education requirements soon to be approved and then we treat them in a sort of way that I think is somewhat shy of our full mission here on campus. So the cinema seems like a nice perk but may be only after you get to sit in the classes at ten o'clock in the morning and not sweat.

MCROBBIE: The thing is that the way that one tries to address all these issues is kind of comprehensively at once. There are some issues you have to address per item and there are others that you can address in parallel. And the reason why I'm proposing addressing most of these in parallel is because I believe that there is the potential, for example in the case of a cinema, there are people who I believe may be willing to fund an initiative like that. Frankly I'm willing to fund the air conditioning in Ballantine Hall. So that's why I think we should take advantage of all these opportunities. I think in terms of the long overdue attention to the fabric of the campus which I think is lamentable. I'm sure as much as you have, I've taught a few classes in that building on a guest basis and it's appalling and fully sympathize with the kinds of issues that you raise. So we've got to start somewhere and I'm going to start by trying to find what's going to cost. I literally don't know the answer to that question. Is it a million...

BUCUR-DECKARD: That's the topic.

MCROBBIE: Exactly. But it's extremely important to the fundamentals of the educational mission of the campus. As I said, is it a million, is it five hundred thousand. Figures like that you get further, is twenty million, it's harder. So let's at least find out what the hell the figure is to start with.

HAMBURGER: This is your first presentation of the state of the campus as Provost. I'd like to hear a few thoughts about the evolution of this position itself and the relation with administration on the campus here and perhaps in relation to other campuses of the IU system.

MCROBBIE: I think one of the things that it probably has done and President Herbert deserves credit for this too I think and Neil; Neil is aware of this, is that we have been to start focusing in on Bloomington specific issues in a way that I haven't really seen happen in the 10 years that I've been here. I think some of those budget issues, some of those changes that were made that helped us out of a very difficult situation came from, I think, a greater focus on the campus as well. And I think some of the issues were starting to address now are coming because of that as well. The President started meeting with a group of us who he regards as myself, Neil and a couple of others as the leaders of the Bloomington campus. I think that's been quite useful in terms of focusing in more on Bloomington specific issues. It means that Neil, myself and Terry Clapacs and a couple of other people get together in the same room, so some of these facilities issues can, I think, get more sustained attention that they may be had in the past. Neil, would you agree with that?

THEOBALD: Absolutely.

ROTELLA: I'm interested in the connection between student recruitment, tuition, scholarship aid and raising standards. I'm not sure -- in my own mind I can't make it all work very well. We want more of the students whom we would give merit-based aid and we want more of the students whom we would give need-based aid. So basically those are the students basically whom we pay to come to IU. But if we're going to increase the amount of our support, which comes from tuition, we have to also somehow increase the number of students who pay to come to IU. And seem to be not the people that we are focusing on.

MCROBBIE: Well, if one looks at increasing tuition, what it is then is that then it becomes a delicate balance between those people who are willing to pay the additional tuition to come to the university, and can afford it through those increases. One then uses some of that increase to in turn help fund the financial aid, whether it be need or merit based. That's the equation, that's the modeling that one has to carry out. But it's not directly linear in the sense that if you put it up by a certain amount that it all goes to financial aid. It doesn't work that way. That's the way that university is going to have to decide in terms of tuition increases is to look at these things and look at how to balance them. But the other with commenting on is that in terms the campaign that's underway at the moment for the campus has been very successful in raising funding to support financial aid. I've forgotten the exact figure, Neil, but it's ninety million or something like that?

THEOBALD: Nearly a hundred.

MCROBBIE: Nearly a hundred million dollars that's coming to support financial aid. That's another mechanism. So it doesn't all have to be done. Financial aid is not something that's all covered just out of tuition increases as well but it does play a major role obviously in faculty salary increases for example to retain and recruit the best faculty.

DAVILA: As one who has been associated with the faculty council Library Committee for many a year, I wonder if you have any vision possibly slightly premature at this point as to what your vision might be of the digital future of the library. And even though perhaps this committee of experts you invited to assess externally the situation of our library system here, what might be your thoughts especially coming from where you do come and how we might better and at the same time salvage that which is best of the old time library system that we've been used to in the past.

MCROBBIE: I don't think there's any sort of secret to what the right strategy is here. It's just a balance that depends on the discipline and then at the second order of level it depends on the particular kinds of scholars and faculties that you have. So one area that, chemistry for example, people will rarely touch books or periodicals, the great bulk of stuff will be online. In other areas they will hardly ever touch digital stuff although that is becoming increasingly rare, then the balance is going to vary from discipline to discipline. So there's no doubt that there's an increasing role for the digital world. I'm a computer scientist but we had the chairman of the national endowment of humanities here a few weeks ago and it's where he's putting the bulk or starting to put the bulk of his funding. But he's always putting all his funding and so on and so on. He's an authority argues that that is the case. So the critical thing is getting that balance right and ensuring that one is taking advantage of the opportunities to advance scholarship; that's at the end of the day what it's about. It's not for the sake of technological ratification that one does these things. I hope that report, I hope to have very soon. It should be may be this week and then I'll distribute it. It will say sensible things.

MILLER: We had a certain amount of time in mind for these questions. I think we've may be have done what we can do here. We have a reception out in the hall. You can find Michael out there and if you have something you would like to say to him please feel free to do so.

Just to conclude with a comment, my own reaction to Luis' question is that this will highlight the importance of the librarians in the overall scheme of things here as we go forward because they obviously will have a critical role to play in determining the balance. Thank you. Thank you all for coming.