

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL RETREAT

Friday, February 19- Sunday, February 21, 2010

Submitted by Marsha Bollinger, Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees

Here are some selected items that were discussed at the Board Retreat. These are not the only items that were discussed. Many of the items do not represent actions that will occur, but are ideas for consideration as the Board attempts to think about what is best for the University today and into the future.

1. The Board had a demonstration of a new product, Diligent Board Books, which will allow the Board to carry on business without the mounds of paper they currently use. The electronic online system is secure and accessible from almost anywhere at any time. The Executive Officers are piloting the system now.
2. Ken Wingate and Garrison Walters from the SC Commission on Higher Education gave a talk and lead discussion on the Higher Education Study Plan and Transform SC. SC is one of the few states that is not focusing on improvements in higher education; the goal is to change that in order to make economic improvements in the state. Ken and Garrison are making presentations throughout the state in hopes of energizing local communities to determine how to best create a culture change in support of higher education. This will require making higher education a public priority and changing public awareness. For more information, go to http://www.che.sc.gov/HigherEd_ActionPlan.htm.

The rest of the retreat had the book, The Shift Age by David Houle, as a backdrop. The premise of the book is that the information age is ending and we are now entering an age of constant change. How does this concept impact our university?

3. The Board was updated on the campus facilities project that included some of the following:
Projects underway: Scholar's Walk, DiGiorgio Center, Bancroft roof, Tillman interior work
Projects coming soon: Hardin Family Garden, former Peabody Field, improvements to Phelps Hall
Future projects with funding identified: improvements to Roddey, McLaurin, Rutledge, Dinkins, updates to selected athletic facilities (soccer field lights upgrades, changes to the golf course, for instance)
Future projects for which funding has not yet been identified: LIBRARY, for instance
4. One complete session was devoted to governance of the university, from the federal level (stimulus money) to the regional level (SACS) to the state level (CHE; state-assisted university) and to campus level. Currently the governance structure is meant to be very deliberative and NOT nimble. It was within this section of the Board meeting that the motion passed at the 20 November 2009 Faculty Conference meeting was presented and discussed. The response of the Board will be discussed at the next Faculty Conference meeting (Friday, February 26, 2010). The Board also was briefed by the student representative on the current student campus discussion on the effectiveness of the Council of Student Leaders structure.
5. Finances of the University:

Public dollars: The depressing issue of declining state support was concisely presented. A new twist to the story is of course the inclusion of stimulus dollars in the mix. We were also shown some pieces of a presentation prepared by some legislative staffers that describes the stimulus dollars as a plug in the breach. This "plug" will disappear soon; to avoid falling over a cliff, we all must think creatively and come up with new approaches.

Tuition dollars: The University is very tuition dependent. Recruitment, retention, and enrollment are increasingly important to us. A presentation by Kathryn Holten updated the group on new and ongoing efforts to attract and retain our students.

Development dollars: The Board was updated on development initiatives by Brien Lewis.

6. Programs and services: We are training students who will work at jobs that we have not yet imagined. Change will be necessary to keep up with our “customers”. The standard model of the university has worked well for us so far, but we must take other models of degree programs seriously. These might include online degrees or hybrid degrees with both on campus and online components. The “standard” 4-year degree model may need to be joined by other models such as a 3-year degree, a 5-year bachelors and master’s degree, or perhaps a more personalized degree program.
7. We finished by examining the current structure of the University. Should it look this way to meet the needs of our future and the rapid changes that are likely to come?