Exempt Staff Forum Minutes
Thursday, March 11, 2010
1:00-2:30, MHC 304 and TMH 252

Members present: Linda Dorn, John Barron, Margaret Cahill, Liz Dussol, Nate Rolloff, Kim Schumann, Sandy Schwartz, Jerry Sweeney, Kay Wimer
Absent: Tony Lewno

Welcome from Linda D. and introductions of our speakers. Previous survey results are posted on the ESC website. There will be brown bag discussion sessions and an email has been announced regarding those. We are also requesting any feedback you have from today.

Dr. Sue Huber:
Graduate Student Enrollment: Patterns were discussed, grad initiatives, enrollment. Headcount was shown, credits really tell the tale. In year 2000, close to 6000 students, in 2009 just over 4000. There has been a steady decline. She also had numbers for the specific graduate units to get an idea of where decline is more than others. School of Social work and School of Engineering seem to have increased some, others have either just maintained or declined. Credits in 2000 were about 29,000, then dipped to a low in 2006, slowly increasing to about 24,000 in 2009. Only 16.7 percent of our students are full time grad students, most are part time, working adults. Grad student Avg Credit Load has very slightly increased in 2009 to about 5.5. Software Engineering has decreased in credits the most, which also makes OCB look lower overall.

Enrollment projections: Projections are relatively flat across the board for the next few years, with only a couple areas looking a bit more promising. We are working to create some marketing strategies. Also working on budgets, coming up with new ideas for budget and increased enrollments.

Mark Vangsgard:
Anderson Student Center: Many universities have been building student centers and rec complexes in the last 15 years. We were at a point we were at a distinct market disadvantage by not having an updated facility. August 6 is when is anticipated to open the new center. Currently the last building is coming down and will be gone in 2 weeks. The new rec center will be completed just in time to welcome fall sports teams. The student center will look like UST outside, but new and amazing inside. It will be on the corner of Summit and Cretin and look like other UST buildings. Slides were presented to show the building from various angles. It will be closer to the athletic fields than the previous building (MHC). There will be a sort of atrium and it will have “main streets” with lots of events and spaces (destinations). Even when food areas are closed, seating areas will be open. It will be very open and have a lot of natural light. There won’t be a typical “cafeteria” but more eating options. The third floor will have a snack area similar to a Coffee Bene and will also have a ballroom which can be divided in half and has three possible staging areas. Tables will be able to be removed from room to room. The rooms/building will be open more than other buildings currently on campus. They are looking into options for security. There will be options in the multi-use ballroom for theater (movies, music, etc.) and will be able to hold up to 900 people depending on event setup. The rec center will have new equipment similar to a YMCA or other gym. They are looking to have it run like a fitness place where you would have a membership but there will be incentives to use it such as using it X times per month will get you a full rebate. Currently the buildings will not be
connected via tunnels but there is an option for the student center to connect to Aquinas. Currently it is not in the budget though. Donors wanted!

Mark Dienhart:
Costs for the new buildings have been separated out from operating budgets. We are an enrollment driven institution so our budget is directly affected by enrollment and credits. Last year we were able to have a 5.9% comprehensive increase. Business as usual for this year was not an option as we could not increase costs like previous years. We weren’t paying enough attention to affordability to the community. This year has a 3.5% increase with increased financial aid as well, other costs may come along in future years for students once they are here that they will absorb, but they know that up front. They also needed to come up with some sort of pay plan for this year, it was modest, but made a reality. We also needed to start rebuilding our quasi-endowment which we plan to do. A voluntary retirement program was set up as an alternative to lay offs. 49 people had positions either not replaced or took the early retirement option. We still have a $1.4 difference to meet. Options are being looked at such as lowering the retirement contribution. Among our peer institutions we are moderately priced, right in the middle. Questions still remain of how can we make UST more affordable to students? Current enrollment – we are looking at confirming deposits now. We are currently slightly below where we are from 1 year ago but we are dealing with different variables and obstacles this year. But we are still working hard to make our goals and they are optimistic that we will make our goals. We are currently on track as well for the Opening Doors campaign.

Mark Vansgard:
Information on budget: We brought in huge enrollments this past fall which of course helped a lot. We did have more financial aid that we handed out though as well. We did see a noticeable decline in credits from fall to this spring as well. Other sources of income/revenue are also down. Energy expenses are down though which is good news. We have also been able to delay some maintenance and repairs to help out. So we will finish this year in good shape. A challenge we will have for FY11 is freshman class, but we are looking to be on track. Retention will also continue to be a challenge. But there are a lot of unknowns. Board of Trustees gave us a $10 million challenge from the start. We’ve had an average of 6.2% increase the past 5 years, this year 3.5%. Of the 17 MN private colleges and universities we have had a relatively low increase the past 5 years. We are number 8 for total charges this year where we were closer to the top in previous years, which means we have done a good job. There are about 50 positions that will not be here next year, some just not refilled, many coming from the voluntary retirement options. Talked about the difference of endowments vs. quasi-endowment: Endowments are for more specific purposes but the quasi-endowment is more like a savings account. We are hopeful that the $6 plus million saved from last year will help with the $1.4 million deficit we have, but the future can’t be predicted so we seem to be in a good spot but there are a lot of variables.

Linda wrapped up and thanked our speakers. There are surveys on tables for future recommendations.

Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,
Nate Rolloff