

Report on University Welfare for Faculty Senate, Feb. 18, 2009

By Senator Robert Schwartz, UFF-FSU Government Relations Committee Chair

- Administration and faculty bargaining teams met twice since January's Faculty Senate.
 - At the first meeting, the teams reviewed budget issues with VP Bob Bradley, and decided to defer further discussions on matters closely linked to General Revenue funding until April. Also, the Administration withdrew its previous proposal for reduced summer teaching pay for the current year.
 - At the second meeting new non-tenure track teaching classifications and new faculty awards funded from non-General Revenue sources were discussed.
 - Some progress was made on both issues
 - Discussions will continue
 - The teams will meet again Monday afternoon. Bargaining sessions are public meetings and Senators are most welcome to attend

- In many ways, bargaining sessions necessarily focus on how the pie is sliced because the size of the pie has been determined by legislator decisions. With that in mind, I want to focus your attention on the upcoming legislative session.

- I hope all of you will join us, and encourage students, staff, and faculty to participate in "The Fate of the State" activities. Various activities are being planned to educate legislators about the precarious state of Florida higher education and the need for new legislative directions. You have all heard much on this already.

- At present, FL is at or near the bottom (depending on which survey you read) in per capita funding for higher education. One survey has us dead last at 50 while others put us at 48. Given that FL is also ranked as the 4th wealthiest state in the US, something is clearly out of alignment. On the present course, higher education in FL is on a starvation diet; one which will be difficult if not impossible to recover from if we allow state support to erode. It is not hard to see that Bright Futures will become Dim Futures as more and more in-state students will be forced to leave the state due to cuts in programs and majors. Even athletics may disappear as recruits will not come to universities that

can't offer degree programs in their fields. Football may soon be reduced to two semi-professional teams in Gainesville and Tallahassee who hit the field with semi pro, non-student players just to get by. The Chancellor of the North Carolina system has already announced his eagerness to hire as many Florida faculty as he can as the Florida universities begin to announce layoffs and cutbacks.

- The efforts of the Fate of the State coalition is to stress the challenges facing higher education and even the possibility that higher education in Florida will not be viable much longer. The Fate of the State effort is to encourage the Legislators to consider other revenue streams and sources beyond just property taxes and tourism. And to keep higher education in Florida from fading away. It is time for action. Over the next few weeks, the planned activities include:
 - Calls, letters, and e-mails to legislators
 - A rally, march, and Capitol teach-in on Tuesday, March 3
 - Please participate and encourage your colleagues and others to join
 - You are also welcome to join "Fate" planning meetings, including tonight's 6pm meeting in the Williams Building Room 013 – right next door!
 - Info on the Fate of the State can be found at the UFF-FSU website if you are interested.

As you may know, some student leaders have also organized a demonstration for March 4 in support of the Governor's proposed tuition increase policy. However the focus of their efforts is towards the differential tuition policy. The main drive for the March 4 demonstration is coming from the Florida Student Association which represents the 11 student government groups at state institutions around Florida. At the last Fate of the State gathering, the CEO of FSA, Chris Krampert attended and shared their plans with us. The two groups agreed to proceed separately and hold marches on both March 3 (Fate of the State) and March 4 (FSA to support differential tuition).

- Finally, but not unrelated to politics and the legislature, I'd like to invite everyone to lunch

- Next Tuesday, Florida Education Association President Andy Ford will respond to faculty members' questions about politics, the legislature, and the FEA
 - Lively and interesting discussion is expected, as well as spicy New Orleans cuisine for this Mardis Gras luncheon
 - That's Tuesday, Feb. 24th at 12:30 in the Rovetta Business Building's Weichelt Lounge (Rm. 220)
 - Please join us and bring a colleague or two. Costumes optional
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- More information on "Fate of the State" activities and the luncheon with Andy Ford is available at the UFF-FSU web site
 - Questions? Thank you.