

Executive Committee, Council of Chairs Meeting of March 20, 2006 Minutes

Members present: AMC (Peter Nwosu), B&E (Shirley Svorny), ECS (Nagi El Nagi), H&HD (Joyce Munsch), S&M (Larry Allen), S&BS (Nathan Weinberg), Oviatt (Doris Helfer), ExL (Tyler Blake), CFA (Julio Blanco); **Guest:** Chair Peter Grego (Music).

1. Minutes of December 19 meeting unanimously approved.
2. Council resolved to invite AVP for faculty affairs' to attend April 17 meeting to update and clarify issues related to AY 2008-2009 University Calendar.
3. Chair informed members about the campus data warehouse and departmental information, and requested members to inform him about what kinds of information they might need to facilitate their work so that Council can extend invitations to campus officials to share such information.
4. **Grade Inflation Study**
Council members discussed and adopted the report of its sub-committee (Peter Nwosu, Shirley Svorny and James Sefton) on grade distribution across the university, the first such study in some 25 years. The goal of the study is to promote the President's vision of a learning-centered university and the value of degree programs at the university in the light of the Provost's fall 2005 message to faculty concerning academic standards and grading practices. The committee's comprehensive study titled: "Grade Inflation at California State University, Northridge: 1990-2004--A First Look," focused on university, college, and department levels for upper, lower division and remedial courses, and found variations at all levels. Highlights of the recommendations in the study include: that the university begin a process of review and evaluation of grading practices and grade inflation at specific, consistent levels, every three years, to be undertaken by the Council of Chairs working with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning; that the university review messages about graduation rates to ensure that highest priority is given to the maintenance of academic standards; because grading is faculty business, the Council favors self-reflection, self-analysis, and self-correction with individual faculty and departments, and not University-imposed statistical mandates; that deans work with departments and faculty to ensure that the Provost's message about course evaluations—that he prefers peer evaluations to guide his tenure and promotion decisions—be given serious attention. In this regard, Council recommended that "it might be well to return course evaluations to their original purpose of faculty feedback and eliminate their use in retention, tenure and promotion entirely."

Council members mandated its sub-committee on grade distribution to discuss the results of the study with the Provost and to work out modalities for sharing the information with departments and deans as well as implementing the recommendations.
5. **Guest: Provost Hellenbrand**
The Provost spoke with the Council regarding five key issues: enrollment growth

projections and expectations (including plans for growth in graduate programs); faculty attrition and recruitment plans (with the assumption that CSUN cannot be beaten by another CSU campus in recruitment offers, and with allocations to be made now to colleges, not to departments); student advising (with the goal of taking advising to students--AVP Cynthia Rawitch working on streamlining practices/inconsistencies across the board in the context of the University's current "decentralized advising model"); new planning model (on-going consultation with various campus units on coherent and purposeful planning that links budget process with planning process); and chairs roles and rewards. With the latter item, Provost recognizes increasing responsibilities of chairs with regard to management, planning, frequent new mandates/requests, teaching, fund-raising, etc. He clarified the recent settlement between CFA and CSU regarding the 4.5% increase (not a permanent raise, stays until one ceases to be chair), and noted that he was not in favor of any salary augmentation from the university for chairs given that there is an on-going arbitration. However, he stated that he was open to considering a change in administrative/time base for department chairs if such request came to his office. Council plans a discussion of this at its next meeting. The Provost also encouraged chairs to convey information directly to him about institutional challenges that they and their faculty face that impact quality service delivery at the university.

6. Next meeting is April 17, 2006 from 10:00am-12noon (Room 3107, Juniper Hall, (formerly Business Administration Building). **Council meetings are open to the University Community.**

Minutes prepared by Peter Nwosu, Council Chair