

Report of the Chair of the University Senate, Professor J. Paul Robinson, October 12, 2012

At the last BOT meeting I specifically addressed the issue of administrative bloat. I pointed out that the growth in administration at Purdue University appeared to be excessive. My numbers were not complete. They only showed the years from 2001 to 2010. It gives me no pleasure at all, to report to you that it has apparently been business as usual at Purdue over the past year. The new numbers are in, and it shows that over an 11 year period the numbers have risen from 58% to 62% increase in administrators while the faculty show an increase of only 8%. What this translates to in business terms, is that our cost of business has increased, but Purdue has not focused its resources on increased quality of our product – which is education. A new study to be released this month by Martin & Hill is going to show that there is a direct and mathematically robust correlation between the number of administrators and the cost of education. To quote Martin and Hill¹ “..we find evidence that shared governance lowers cost and the optimal staffing ratio is approximately three tenure track faculty members for every one full time administrator. Costs are higher if the ratio is higher or lower than three to one. As of 2008 the number of full time administrators is almost double the number of tenure track faculty.” I really don’t know how it is that apparently the only people who find this concerning are the faculty.

There are currently 110 open tenure track faculty positions at this institution². This can be interpreted a number of ways- 1. Faculty are not happy and leaving. 2. We can’t convince faculty to come here, or 3. and the option most likely, is that for the past few years, while we have increased the number of highly paid administrators every single year, we did not have the funds to hire faculty. Purdue University had sufficient funds to hire about 20 additional administrators last year but the funding necessary to attract and hire faculty has not been available. This has resulted in a period of several years of faculty reductions leading to a situation that the number of tenure tracked faculty is now lower than the 2006 while a steady increase in administrative hires every single year has been allowed. As the Board of Trustees, I believe you have taken on the responsibility of carefully reviewing administrative decision at this institution. With the greatest respect, I suggest that if you use a sole source of information on which to base your decisions, you may not be exercising the responsibilities entrusted you by the taxpayers of Indiana.

¹ Robert E. martin and R. Carter Hill “Measuring Baumol and Bowen Effects in Public Research Universities” to be published October 2012, Social Science Research network, (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2153122)

² 110 open positions available at <http://www.purdue.edu/ethics/oie/openings.html>

There are some key issues facing the faculty right now. Foremost perhaps, and one that has monumental impact on faculty and students has been the public discussion regarding the possibility that Purdue will move to a full trimester system. The acting president has indicated in the past, that such a consideration has been long term in the 8-10 year range if indeed it is pursued. However, the President-elect, has noted in public that he finds the trimester paradigm of significant interest and has even suggested the possibility of a much shorter timescale if it were considered. This has attracted significant discussion by the faculty and so as an attempt to identify as many of the issues both positive and negative, the university senate will spend the next senate meeting on Monday entirely focused on this issue. We will be videoing this meeting so that all the faculty can have the opportunity for participating in this discussion. If Purdue were to pursue a trimester system, it would impact every faculty member significantly – not just a small amount, it would require huge changes and it is clear that no one at Purdue yet fully understands that impact. We hope that we can at least start to clarify many of these issues before any consideration for implementation might be considered.

Thank you very much.