

RE: UAlbany and the Empowerment Act

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Message_ID <6999718ED3E19D4AA061F73254EEA3410FAEE7A1@UAEXCH.univ.albany.edu>
From Daniel D White
Date 2010-02-23 19:09:41.758000+00:00
To R Michael Range <range@math.albany.edu>
Cc William A Lanford <lanford@cnsunix.albany.edu>; Gail Cameron <GCameron@uamail.albany.edu>
Subject RE: UAlbany and the Empowerment Act

Dear Michael,

With your permission, I would like to have this message sent to the Senate Executive Council.

Dan

From: O'Brien, Ken [mailto:Ken.O'Brien@suny.edu]

Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 1:28 PM

To: Daniel D White

Cc: William A Lanford; R Michael Range; Donato, Carol; LIST, UFS EXEC.CMTEE EXPANDED

Subject: RE: UAlbany and the Empowerment Act

Dear Dan,

I am writing now, because I share your belief about the importance of the Empowerment Act.

As you indicated, we didn't want to push the issue prematurely at the Winter Plenary, choosing instead to await the policies that will be before the Board of Trustees in March, the policies that will govern the implementation of both tuition increases and campus leasing for the future. Those are the areas that UUP has opposed most strongly, and the areas about which questions remain among faculty across the system.

We (the Executive Committee) accepted an invitation graciously extended by Phil Smith and UUP to meet and discuss the bill. At that meeting the UUP leadership expanded on their concerns, which I think it is fair to say have hardened into opposition. Monica Rimai has also asked to meet with us, an invitation that I am in the process of accepting, after which we will be arranging time together as soon as possible.

We know time is short; we just don't know how short.

I intend to resist the UFS taking any firm, public stand until we see the policies that will be guiding the implementation of the bill. I still believe this is the prudent, smart choice, one that fits our academic training. We decide, but we decide on the basis of evidence, not belief.

Once the policies are public, and we have had a chance to examine them, I will convene a phone conference of the Executive Committee, during which we will be discuss the choices available to us, which at this point remain, 1. Opposing the bill; 2. Supporting the bill; and 3. Remaining publicly silent. The issue is complicated by the fact that we are between plenaries, and as you have indicated, we may be running out of time for effective action. That would mean we have two options for action: to use the electronic communication media to poll the Senators, either by a formal vote or by another straw poll, but this one would have material provided beforehand, or the Executive Committee could act.

I am committed to working through this issue, or set of issues, in a logical, appropriately speedy time frame, examining all the alternatives before taking the next step. Moreover, I am committed to informing the body (the UFS) and the constituencies before any formal action as well as providing explanations for actions taken. Your email may well be a early warning that something of an update needs to go to the Senators quickly.

Now, to your specific questions:

1. Is April too late? My wording, not yours, but the answer is we don't know. That will depend on the legislature's schedule, but April may well be too late.
2. Yes, but I think campus discussions should be informed. At this point, for example, we have statements in support from campus administrations, statements in opposition from UUP and NYSUT. What remains for me are those policies that will actually govern the implementation, policies that could make for very different futures for SUNY. Hence, the uncomfortable waiting until the ink has dried and they have been distributed.
3. As indicated above, we could, either issue a statement by the Executive Committee, which could then be debated and either supported or repudiated at the next plenary, or using modern technology, we could get a much finer feel for the sentiments of faculty across the system. Each, by the way, has advantages and disadvantages.
4. No. I am assuming that they are waiting, as are we, for the governing policies to be announced.

Dan, I suspect this response is less than you wanted. Please let your colleagues at U Albany know that we (the UFS leadership) are committed to understanding the implications of the Empowerment Act before we either speak about it or advise the campuses. I have spent more time on this issue than any other since the plenary, which I expect will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future.

Finally, any and all suggestions are welcome.

Cordially,

Ken

-----Original Message-----

From: Daniel D White [mailto:DWhite@uamail.albany.edu]

Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 11:52 AM

To: O'Brien, Ken

Cc: William A Lanford; R Michael Range; Donato, Carol

Subject: UAlbany and the Empowerment Act

Dear Ken,

I'm writing on behalf of the UAlbany Senate Executive Committee to seek some advice. Yesterday, we had a rather somber report from President Philip and Provost Phillips about the state of the budget and the prospects for the Governor's Empowerment Act. Our President and senior Administrators, as I'm sure you are aware, are very much in favor of the Empowerment and Innovation act. Strident opposition by UUP has clearly reduced the popularity of the Act within the legislature and some feel that an opportunity to improve SUNY is slipping through our fingers. At the time of our last Plenary, we clearly

did not have enough information to make a strong statement for or against the Act. I believe that we made the right decision to wait and see. However, our Provost was quite clear yesterday that, in her opinion, if the University Faculty Senate waits until the next Plenary to make a resolution to support or reject the Act, it will be too late to have any influence on the process.

In that context, I was hoping to get your advice on a few questions.

- 1) Do you think that a resolution in April will still have some impact?
- 2) Would a campus by campus discussion help to inform the UFS? Would a campus-based resolution help in the UFS deliberations?
- 3) Could the UFS make a statement before our next plenary based on individual campus conversations?
- 4) Do you know of any other campus senates who have already made resolutions?

Any other advice that you can provide would be greatly appreciated. It was clear from the straw vote that you took in Cobleskill, that many Senators are inclined to take a bit of leap toward the unknown rather than maintain the rather stifling status quo. Our local UUP executive committee has had little success in putting together a forum to expose the issue to our community. I expect that lots of us are on the fence and we should probably lean one way or another.

I'm ccing Bill and Michael here to be sure that I have not missed anything.

Thanks.

Dan

PS: Congrats on the new book!

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