

March 26, 2008

To: HSU Faculty

From: John Powell

Dear Colleagues,

This is a report on some of your General Faculty President's activities. It's longer than it looks, since it contains links to various statements and other work I've done, including some for which I'm trying to get credit even though it antedates my election, plus info about work done by others. Please forward any of this to anyone for any reason.

I sit on several committees as a result of my office, (plus the Univ. Curriculum Committee, to which I was elected during 06-07). Those committees include, besides the University Budget Committee, the Provost's Council, the University Executive Council, the Academic Senate Executive Committee, the Senate itself. I fairly often serve as the Senate Chair's proxy to the President's Council. I don't sit on the Council of Chairs. There are some other committee responsibilities. I keep a Google calendar I'm happy to share.

1. **Budget:** In connection with the recent visit of Dr. Glen Toney of the Board of Trustees, current cuts, and the fact that having a budget is a prerequisite to our achieving anything, I have a couple of documents. Most recently, I wrote a letter to our two legislators, and a copy of one is on my website at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/pwigginsnberg.pdf>, along with an excerpt from a background sheet I sometimes give students. My rough draft of notes on what any trustee, legislator, or student activist should know about HSU and our budgetary situation, which I sent around before meetings with Dr. Toney, are at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/BOTnts.htm>. A more anguished statement I gave to Trustee Achtenberg when she visited is at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/rachtenbergnt.pdf>. An op-ed piece I had in the *Times-Standard* (2/10/07) gives a couple of basic economic arguments for getting a degree and for supporting higher ed, at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/oped0207.htm>.

Those who elected me General Faculty President put me thereby on the University Budget Committee, though I've never been a department chair and though budget processes do not yet live up to any hype for transparency except by contrast with past practices. I've been schooling myself on our budget and on our relationship to the CSU and the California State budgets. I plan to be wise on these matters by the time I die. The process makes it hard to keep focused on the largest issues. Right now the budget is in such turmoil I have little to say, but I am happy to converse with anyone who has ideas.

2. I was on the ad hoc **Bill of Particulars** task force which drafted a list of faculty concerns regarding the President. There is some controversy regarding this document. The CSU Chancellor, for instance, called the group's chair to express his, well, let's call it discontent. I think the group who drafted it are not entirely happy with it, and faculty who have talked about it in my hearing are divided on whether it is good work. A group from the Senate Executive Committee will be taking the document to meet with the President in order to work toward formal agreements to resolve the issues. Failure to reach agreements may be considered grounds for a vote of No Confidence (or, I suppose, for other actions, such as a request that the President resign). The Bill of Particulars, a list of eleven issues, is available through the Academic

Senate's page at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~acadsen/08-02-26packet.htm>. The minutes on the Academic Senate pages reveal much of the discussion. Results of the ballot to find out whether many faculty thought we should hold a vote of No Confidence in President Richmond, and discussion of those results, are also in the Senate packets. A brief summary of the most important issues and commentary on how to begin work to resolve the issues, drafted by me and then revised with others' input, is at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/bopremedies.pdf>.

The President seems in recent weeks to be reaching out to collaborate regarding budget and budget processes. I regard his upcoming treatment of the German discontinuation proposal, in which it seems to me I see a deep divide along party lines, administrators on the right and most faculty on the left, as an important indicator of commitment to shared governance.

**3. German discontinuation proposal:** I've been involved with this at several levels of review, including the Provost's Council resource review of the World Languages and Cultures Program Review, the UCC's recent review, several testy exchanges about procedures, and the Provost Council's subcommittee's review of the proposal. Hardly any of that is of any use in thinking about the substantive issue of whether we should eliminate the German program. One piece that might be useful is a summary of some of the relevant arguments which I produced for the current subcommittee and then revised while trying to think of broader audiences. One such audience is the Academic Senate, since they have to review and recommend regarding the proposal. I've put a draft of that summary of relevant arguments up at [www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/provcounGer.pdf](http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/provcounGer.pdf). As of early April, a binder, about 250-300 pages of policies, reviews, lobbying letters, and other correspondence, has been made available to the Senate.

4. One more project, pretty much capsized by our budget problems but still being worked on at the CSU system level, is **GE reform**. Eric van Duzer, as Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, has written a background and summary of recent past efforts to change GE. That is at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/evvGETimeline.pdf>. Eric has suggested that because of entrenched constituencies and turf concerns, substantial GE reform will require politically difficult impositions from the top down.

The Chancellor's Office and the Statewide Academic Senate sponsored a conference on GE at the end of February 08 and have been circulating a draft of a replacement for Executive Order 595, one of the main sources for GE structure and policy. That draft as I've seen it differs from the current document mainly in being longer. I've posted a copy at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/595revdraft.pdf>. The State Academic Senate's actions here bear watching. My own involvement over the last few years has included the following:

a. **Proposal to add to GE:** A course I taught in Critical Thinking and Educational Reform resulted in the class drafting a white paper proposing the addition to GE of two senior-level Critical Analysis and Writing courses, each to focus on an urgent social or environmental issue. The white paper is at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/391edrfm.htm>.

b. **Summary and commentary on a national report on GE:** Several campuses including ours have circulated a report on GE published by the UC's Center for the Study of Higher Education. It is generally a good report. I wrote a 6,000 word summary (versus perhaps 30,000 in the original), thinking I could save people from reading the report and pointing out how the report supports a particular view (less fragmentation, more depth, more integration into the degree) of what GE should be, at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/csheGE21.pdf>. A link to the full report is included.

c. **Proposal, freshman orientation course:** This is a draft of a syllabus/proposal for a

one-credit Freshman Seminar/Orientation course, with the idea that every new student would take such a course. One main goal is improved retention. (A slightly different course would need developed for transfer students.) Logistics would be grim, but one credit is better than three, each section can be scheduled an hour and a half per week into Van Duzer Theater, the teachers have to be dynamic, the amount of content has to be formidable enough to keep students on edge throughout, and writing for critical thinking skills needs to be incorporated. The draft proposal is at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/IntroHE.htm>.

d. **(Comic relief? Sorry, no.) Proposal to add a year to the B.A.:** I've been claiming for a while that American universities are long overdue in adding a year to the Bachelor's degree, with the addition mostly to be within GE. Now of course this is politically impossible even if it's right—right, that is, that the world has gotten vastly more complex while the structure of the degree is basically what it was in World War I and that academic majors have crowded GE almost off the end of the bench. I propose that we replace the Areas B, C, and D requirements with the requirement that students complete three minors in addition to their majors, one each in the areas of the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

This would be politically impossible, except that Authorities, namely the aforesaid Commission on GE at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at UCB, strongly if inadvertently support my proposal. My basic idea is in a two page document at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~jwp2/ba5yr.pdf>. Those who object to slowing down students on the way to their degree could perhaps send me their arguments. I'd also appreciate notes as to how the increased FTES would effect the budget.

5. **Ancient history:** In 1998, a mere eyeblink ago in geological or academic time, I published a piece in *Thought and Action* on what education is for, claiming that when we don't know or haven't thought through what education is for then it is lunatic to insist on making it more productive. This seems to me part of the problem too with measuring outcomes (though my quibbling here is apparently two decades late). That is, we first need to be wiser than we are regarding what a young adult gets out of spending four or five years with us (I have a first draft of a mss. on this too, which I'm happy to share). Anyway, that piece is in their archives at <http://www2.nea.org/he/heta98/images/f98-109.pdf>.

6. **A current concern:** I'm beginning to push in Senate Executive Committee the need for better initiatives to recruit new faculty leaders, a need which is rapidly approaching crisis. As Senate Chair Mark Larson has pointed out, we have changed in recent years from a campus top-heavy with full professors to a campus in which there are few of those available for leadership and service roles.

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