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Academic Senate

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Senate Meeting, September 9, 2015

Academic Senate
Illinois State University

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Academic Senate Minutes
Wednesday, September 9, 2015
(Approved)

Call to Order

Senator Kalter called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Senator Lonbom called the roll and declared a quorum.

Approval of Minutes of August 26, 2015

Motion XLVI-10: By Senator Thurman, seconded by Senator Grzanich, to approve the minutes. The motion was approved by the Senate, with the exception of Senator Dyck, who abstained.

Information Technology Issues – Discussion Continues

Senator Kalter: We are going to begin tonight with a continuation of the discussion that we had last time on information technology issues on campus. I believe that we are going to start with an update on ReggieNet and any other updates regarding those issues. We will open it up for questions. We have with us Associate Vice Presidents Smitley, Helm and Walbert. The one person who could not be with us here tonight because of previous engagements was Troy Johnson, the AVP of Enrollment Management. If you have any questions for him, certainly iterate them and we will get those back to him for next time. I will invite our guests to the microphones. I know we got an email update about ReggieNet, but if you could give us that update and any others you might have, that would be terrific.

Mr. Helm: Sure. Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to come here and tell you a little bit about what we have been doing to rectify our current issues with ReggieNet. As many of you know, today was not a very good day for us again. We had the same problem with ReggieNet that we have been having, which is essentially a problem with one of our database servers, the same server that had a memory issue a couple of weeks ago that started this newest phase of issues. What we are seeing is that the central processing unit is spiking unexpectedly. Just out of the blue it will go from about 2%, which is its normal rate, all the way to 100%, which maxes out its capacity. When that happens, all of the queries going to the database backup and that is when the system starts to slow down and people hit the reload button and essentially the server comes to a complete halt. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a way to predict this. We have charted all of the different times that it has happened. We have looked at loads on the server. We have looked at individual pages that people have accessed at that very time. We have been able to boil it down to the discussion forums seems to be the problem area that is hitting the database. That area has a lot of calls to the database when people bring up the forums because each discussion forum entry is equivalent to a database record. Right now, this database has 320 million records, so we are trying to figure out which one of those records is the corrupt record that may be causing this. We had a second outage today that was really our fault because we were trying an analytical tool that was suggested by a vendor to identify that record. It hit that record and crashed, but it did it too fast and we could not find the record. So we do have it narrowed down to the database, but where we need to go is threefold.

The first thing that we have done is executed an agreement with two other vendors. One of the vendors is considered the expert on Sakai. The other institutions host their services with them, including universities like Duke, Arizona State and other major institutions. Their technical support people are the ones who wrote Sakai, the original code that are in that program. We have been talking to the architects of the system. We had an emergency contract that purchasing rushed through on Friday to give us access to those individuals. The bottom line is that we have to get ReggieNet to a different platform. The best course of action is to move it to a hosted platform like some of the other institutions have done that has a 24 hour support of experts on staff. That is what we are working towards right now. The problem right now is keeping ReggieNet stable until we can make that move because we would have to have significant down time to make that move because we literally have to

copy the entire database to another resource instead of a server. We have another emergency contract that we have negotiated with a vendor. I can't get into the specifics right now because of procurement rules. Suffice it to say that we are very confident in the servers that we have already gotten from this provider. We have done our due diligence with other institutions, including some institutions in Illinois who use this provider and all of them have been very helpful with this in terms of the uptime that the provider has had. In the case of one university, they have had one 10 minute outage in three years and that was because of an internet service provider not because of Sakai itself. That is very encouraging to us, but right now we just have to get it stabilized long enough to make that move. We think that is the best course of action to give us the greatest stability moving forward.

Senator Kalter: Mark, did you have anything that you wanted to add before we go to questions?

Dr. Walbert: There are two discussion boards. One is called "Discussions" and one is called "Discussion Forum". Discussions is the one we think is part of the problem. That's why the call went out today to say if you are using Discussions, let's hold off for a few days so that the staff can clean up the database and apply whatever fix they got from the consultant that will help us not have that same problem. When that is clear, we will send out a call for going back to using that tool.

Senator Kalter: Why don't we open up the floor for questions either on ReggieNet or any of the other computer systems issues.

Senator Daddario: Did I understand the architects of Sakai, which is an open source platform, are now being paid to fix their own software?

Mr. Helm: The original architects of the Sakai system now work for a third party vendor that hosts these services. So there is still development work being done in the open source community, but these are the original architects. They are the ones we are talking to. There is still vendor support for the Sakai product. There are still vendors that work very closely with the Sakai product.

Senator Chebolu: I have some questions about Campus Solutions. One of the things that is really disturbing in the Math Department right now is that the major GPAs are completely wrong. Also, the requirements are listed incorrectly. We have put in a ticket, but have had no update. It is a very pressing issue. The major requirement is 2.8 and it is listed as 2.5. The cumulative GPA is correct, but all of the major GPAs are completely messed up. We put in a ticket and it hasn't been addressed.

Mr. Helm: What department are you in?

Senator Chebolu: Mathematics.

Mr. Helm: Let me check on that ticket and I will get an answer for you. I'm not familiar with it so I will have to do some investigation.

Senator Powers: It's getting that time of year when students have quizzes on ReggieNet and tests, including myself. Tomorrow, I only have a limited time to take my ReggieNet test and if the ReggieNet were to go down, who should the students contact and would it be possible to send out a mass email to let the students know that ReggieNet is down and do not worry because teachers will give them an extended time? I know for a lot of students will get a lot of anxiety when ReggieNet is down and it is a big issue.

Mr. Helm: The first place to contact is the Technology Support Center. When ReggieNet went down today, we looked at the log files to see the exact moment in time it went down and then we immediately went to see what tickets were filed. Unfortunately, there was no ticket filed within ten minutes of when it went down. So we

would hope we would see the smoking gun by the person reporting it immediately, but unfortunately that did not happen in this case. That is why we have been encouraging in email contacts to everyone to report it as soon as you can because we do try to marry that up with our log files to look at the root cause. It is very important for our troubleshooting. In terms of emails, there is a balance in terms of sending out emails to the entire campus. It does take a while in order to generate those emails and send those out. There are queries that have to be done to select the correct populations to do that. We have tried to balance sending out information when we have an update. We always do have updates on our Tech Alerts page. You can subscribe to the Tech Alerts mailing list, which basically is a listing of all of the IT systems issues and maintenance outages for the entire campus. That is going to be the most up to date, because it does take us so long to cull the population for all of the students, for instance. We try to be judicious about that because we know students, faculty and staff get a ton of email, so we want to make sure that we are sending out something that when it is important that we have something to communicate. But status updates on systems, usually Tech Alerts is your best bet for the most recent information.

Senator Mogbogu: Regarding what you said about 2.6 million lines of code, I am looking at how you structure the database because what is very complicated about these issues is that we are trying to understand if it is a hardware issue or the query itself. If it is the query, how about putting the query to run on different servers all at the same time so that we can have different views. Those views could be ready for students and faculty to use. So more or less when you have done something you could have the backup on a different server. If it is hardware, then what we can do is to restructure the number of servers we have. So having all queries divided and running on different servers all at the same time, I think it's going to be...My question is is it the queries that could be the problem or is it a server issue?

Mr. Helm: I can get into very specific details, but I am afraid I will lose the audience. Essentially, this has to do with a problem with the version of MySQL server that we are running. We are running a version, basically 5.1, and 5.6 is the most recent version. The 5.1 is known to have a certain problem with certain kinds of queries. So we have two database vendors in addition to the two SAKAI vendors who are working with us on this and have pointed out that we need to upgrade that version of MySQL. The problem is it will take us a week to get there because we have to do it in each individual system the development system and the test system before we even try it in production. We want to make sure we don't bring down all production because of an error in the upgrade. At the same time, we do have a redundant architecture, we do have multiple database servers; we have eight front ends in front of the servers, so it is splitting the queries. But what happens is at a certain point, the virtual servers really stop running because the CPU, the physical servers run too high because so many queries are being hit at that server at the same time. We have twenty servers sitting there. They are all going to max out on CPUs if they get backed up because of the number of queries that are going off at the same time. We have a large load of students at various times during the day. We could have 6,000 to 9,000 simultaneous connections. We also have connections from other systems that connect into there, like My Illinois State for instance. It absorbs 5,000 connections in and of itself. So the scalability of it can go up very quickly even if we had additional hardware. We have tested those things. We do have test environments. We are running tests right now on our test databases to try to simulate the traffic to see if we can break the system, but right now just adding hardware to it probably isn't going to get us much benefit. We just need to be on the most current version of both the database and eventually the product and put it into an infrastructure that is proven by some of the other institutions hosting theirs there.

Senator Mogbogu: So I am thinking it is probably the information systems infrastructure at ISU that might need to be restructured in some way because even if this is being fixed, I can bet you that in ten years' time, this problem will come up again as technology changes.

Mr. Helm: Yes, we are working on 2011 architecture right now. That is when ReggieNet was originally installed here. That is the architecture that we have to get stabilized until we can get into this new architecture that is being updated by the vendor.

Senator Gizzi: If we are going to try to switch to a hosted server during this semester, you need to give faculty a fair amount of knowledge about this so that we can make plans. I have made the mistake of not putting my stuff on my external websites and used ReggieNet extensively this semester and I am regretting that. I appreciate that need, but it is really important that people know because every time you make a change to an assignment, ReggieNet freaks out and says there are already submissions; you can't change anything. You probably can, but you never know if it will actually work or not. If ReggieNet is on a hosted server and it is off campus and thus off network, what impact will this have on bandwidth? You just said something about 9,000 hits at a time. How do we ensure that ReggieNet will have adequate bandwidth every time we are dealing with an external site? That strikes me as a big concern. What protections are there for the security of our intellectual property on a hosted server and at what point, if we are now going to be paying to host ReggieNet off campus, do we start to reevaluate whether or not we should be considering for the future a more robust course management system like Blackboard. This is one of the challenges that we face. Obviously, we can't do that now, but should we be thinking about those things?

Mr. Helm: We have worked over the last four years. We have expanded the bandwidth exponentially here with servers. So we are not using all of our available bandwidth. We have multiple providers, so I am not as concerned with bandwidth needs right now because we have also done a major infrastructure upgrade in terms of our distribution sites and new routers and so forth. So I am fairly confident that the bandwidth would not be an issue.

Senator Gizzi: Not on campus. I am talking about the fact that...because bandwidth is two ways. The size of the pipe here on campus, which we have plenty, and the size of the pipe where this is hosted from. That is what I am concerned about.

Mr. Helm: During our due diligence, we have asked that question about performance and the institutions have reported to us thus far that they have had no problems with performance in terms of the application or the bandwidth getting there. That is the proof in the pudding for us. We want to know what other institutions are experiencing. In terms of notification, we would have to consult with the faculty members and staff about any kind of move to a hosted solution. One of the things we are trying to learn is how long will it take from flash to bang to do that. That is why we are not considering it tomorrow, but we have to understand if this is a two day process or is this a two week process. If I could get it to the winter break, that would be my preference. I would think that that would be your preference as well. At the same time, I have to be a realist about how much can we suffer as an institution. That is my primary concern now. As I learn more about that, certainly we will be talking more about what our options are and I am glad to come back here and discuss that. You had a third.

Senator Gizzi: I was asking how we protect our intellectual property on the hosted server and at what point do we start to look at the price point.

Mr. Helm: We actually do pay for support today and we have a vendor supported version of SAKAI, so we have looked at the pricing structure and the vendors and it is not much different than paying for support for the SAKAI product. We are not anticipating any major increase in cost. Intellectual property, we would have to look at the contracts to make sure that that is provided for. I am sure we can leverage what other institutions have negotiated to ensure that we do have all of those items in there. I have a team in the administrative technologies and business office that negotiates contracts, so they will be calling those other institutions to find out what is in their contracts. I will make sure that we are looking into that.

Senator Marx: You mentioned the two discussion tools, Discussions and Discussion Forums. My understanding is that the Discussion Forums was decided to be phased out this year. Are you reconsidering that decision in light of the problems with the Discussions?

Mr. Helm: No, because it is going to be out of a product in the next release, so as soon as we were to upgrade, that functionality would be gone. It has been dropped from the SAKAI program.

Senator Sanden: I didn't see in the email today any indication of how long Discussions is going to be offline. I know lots of faculty structure a major part of their course around Discussions. Do you have anyway of estimating how long that will be offline? If it is a week, I think we can adapt, but it is going to be weeks or months, faculty members will need to think about and plan for how they are going to make up that deficiency.

Mr. Helm: Our estimate is a week right now. This is based upon advice we have received from our vendor partners in terms of how long it would take us to internally update the application. It could be two days; it could be a week. I tend to be more conservative and go for a longer time frame just to make sure everyone is prepared. I think a week is a good assumption right now in terms of that. Certainly, if we believe it is going to be any longer than that, we will communicate as we go through this process. I think it is very important that we keep everyone updated on what's going on and part of that is any kind of revised dates that we see in that. We tend not to broadcast those dates very widely because of the nature of IT, but in the tech alert that went out this afternoon, we put the weekend as the timeframe we expected it to be down.

Senator Alcorn: I want to preface my comment with acknowledging that understanding the interworkings of technology is not my strong suit, but I use ReggieNet extensively and I am hearing from my colleagues in the CFA. I was quite alarmed to here you say that there isn't concern about bandwidth. Maybe I am understanding that term incorrectly. We have had longstanding problems with what is I think is bandwidth. So let me give you the scenarios that we are facing in the arts. We are very reliant on video, photos. When I designed an online course, for example, I ran out of space. I couldn't embed. I had to use a streaming server, which doesn't work. It doesn't download; the students can't get to it. I have tried to put things on a private YouTube channel, but then I run into copyright issues because they don't recognize educational fair use. My concern is that we not think that this is a recent six week problem. I am seeing the last six weeks as the straw that broke the camel's back, that we have some longer standing issues. Am I misunderstanding what bandwidth is?

Mr. Helm: You are quite right. We have had problems with ReggieNet on a what I would say an unacceptable service basis for the past year. I think last semester, we had something like 15 times when there was either a maintenance outage because of something we knew was going to happen or there was a degradation in the way that ReggieNet was working. This semester, we have had six times at this point. Bandwidth I am talking about the internet speed that we have going to the outside of the campus. When you are talking about video files, yes, they do have a lot of bandwidth requirements. I would have to investigate a little more with this provider on how they handle that. They may have some options. I am assuming that at one of the schools that are hosted by them that they have the same challenges that we do. So I would want to leverage what their experience is with that. I will make a note of that and if there are other issues that any of the faculty members have like that, send those to me so that I can make sure that I ask those questions through our due diligence process. We are not going to jump into this tomorrow. We still have the opportunity to talk to vendors and to understand what their offerings are and if we can solve some other problems at the very same time, that would be great.

Senator Hoelscher: I want to begin by saying I can't imagine the nightmare that ya'll are experiencing, so I pay homage to that. I deeply appreciate the hard work that ya'll are doing. With that being said, ReggieNet is a nightmare for all of us right now and one request I would have is that we think about when it is time to just pull the plug and say folks this isn't going to work this semester and that may happen because it is just really creating havoc. The other question I would have, I know of Blackboard, I know of SAKAI now. Do we have options? I feel when I have a vehicle that is too old and I am pouring money into it and I have to come to the realization that this isn't going to work. Are ya'll confident that this is going to work?

Mr. Helm: That is why we have talked to the other institutions in terms of what their experiences were with other providers. If those other institutions had said SAKAI just doesn't work for us, we would have a different

perspective. In terms of Blackboard, I will tell you that the institutions we have talked to were all former Blackboard, just like we were, that moved to SAKAI and said that their experience under this particular vendor has been a good experience. At this point, I can only go by their word. I know where we are at is not working and we need to do something about that. The best course of action I can see right now is to look at an external vendor to do this so that we can leverage what we already know about SAKAI and at this time making a change in platform mid-semester isn't in the cards for us right now. It would be a lot more disruptive to the campus than what we are experiencing today. We are seeing ReggieNet up times for at least two days. Most of the outages have been within a two day timeframe. We are looking to see if we can schedule some time during non-peak hours to reboot the servers to elongate that. Again, I think our best course of action after talking with other institutions and talking with some of my colleagues in the same situation is that we do look at a hosted solution for this. We have gone with hosted solutions for other products. The housing application for instance, the Oracle products. We have had acceptable performance with those. So we do think that the experience we have had so far has been positive with it. That is why we do think it is a viable option. Your point is well taken that at some point we do have to make a decision about how we move forward.

Senator Grzanich: As students, should we be anticipating more unexpected outages in the near future and if so, could you possibly give us more information on what times these outages may be inclined to happen so we can plan around our schedules and make sure we are not missing any assignments?

Mr. Helm: Unfortunately, I can't. That is what we have been trying to plod out. Is there any rhyme or reason to the times? We have had it twice happen at lunch hour. We have also had it happen at 10:00 p.m., so unfortunately, if we could do that, we would create a time to bring it down gracefully so that everyone would know. What I have my staff working on right now is looking at is there a time to gracefully bring it down during a non-peak time, 5 in the morning or whenever that is. Will that get us through the day and just do it every day so that we can make sure that the peak hours are held. There is a lot of traffic at lunch time and people are doing things at that point, but we have not been able to see that traffic itself is the problem. It is hitting something that is corrupted in that database. We have to find out what that is or we have to export that database out to another site that will get rid of the corruption of it. If I had a time, I would certainly let everyone know to stay out at this time; it is going to go down. But literally we have no warning. We see the CPU spike in a few seconds and it is gone. We have several monitoring tools that we have on those servers and that is what they hit. They see the CPU go and by that time, there is nothing we can do but restart it. It does take us about 45 minutes to restart, because we have to bring the database down gracefully so that we don't get any future corrupted data in it. So that is usually the time that you are seeing. We have kept it down for about an hour to get log files that we are sending to our vendor partners, but right now the down time is usually about an hour.

Senator Rich: This is a more general question, but not unrelated. We have had several quarters of very decent private sector growth, but we are in a period of extreme public sector austerity. I imagine the turnover of key personnel is more severe in your area than anywhere else on campus. Would you like to briefly comment on current staffing challenges?

Mr. Helm: We certainly do have a number of staffing challenges in Administrative Technologies and Dr. Walbert can comment on his areas. All of the progress that we have made in terms of updating the software stack that we use here, the enterprise architecture that we have here, does make our people marketable and there are players in town that will take advantage of that. They can pay a lot more than we can. At the same time, we give opportunities to our people that they would not have in the corporate structure. We are doing things here in terms of architectural development that they would never have the opportunity to do at those institutions. So there are some things that we do provide for people that would keep them here. We are working on a number of programs within Administrative Technologies to retain staff, leadership opportunities, flexible work schedules, that are commonly offered within IT, but IT is an area where the whole world has changed. You don't get the lifers anymore. You have a window that you have people before they want to make the next move. We have to change with the times and we have to recruit, create those pipelines, make sure that we are at the recruiting fairs

and that we have fast training programs. As you know, as soon as someone very experienced leaves, that leaves a big hole in terms of your organizational memory, so we try to make sure that we are three deep in every system so that we can adjust to those challenges as they come up. You are right; it is an incredible challenge, but we are doing our best to meet that challenge within the educational environment. My colleagues at other institutions have very similar challenges. I don't think it is unique to Illinois State. *Educause* recently published a paper showing that most institutions are looking at 25% turnover a year potentially. The IT average is somewhere around a third in terms of normal attrition rates. So we are right in line with the *Educause* numbers right now, but it is something that we are very concerned about and we are trying to institute some additional programs to ensure that we don't have the knowledge drain.

Senator Daddario: I have a question about Cognos. When I was asking faculty to give me questions, I got a lot back from the advisors and some of our administrative people who deal with recruitment and they are saying "I am finding it nearly impossible to do my job. I am recruiting blindly." We have been asked to set enrollment targets for the recruiting class, but they can't even pull the reports to give them information about those things. What kind of information should I bring back to them?

Mr. Helm: Cognos is our business intelligence interface by IBM that sits on top of our data warehouse. Our data warehouse is still under development, we're moving data out there as we extract it from the system. There are a lot of requirements that have to go into that. We work with the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid Office and so forth to get those requirements so that we can put that data out to the warehouse. There is sometimes a lot of logic that goes in with that. Sometimes the raw data is not useful to the institution or has to have logic built into that. We also have to not only transform that data to make it more useful, but we have to put in enough information into Cognos to make it to make sense what that data really is. For example, what does begin-date mean? One of the challenges that we have right now is security in terms of getting security granular enough so that the department only sees its department things and the college only sees its college things. Right now we have engagement with a vendor to do just that, to speed that process up. So what we have right now is trying to get a lot of data into the data warehouse so that it can be used in Cognos and so it is splitting our people's time to also do the security model so that departments can see what they need to see. We are hoping to speed that process up immensely with this vendor contract to get that up to speed and that will allow us now to get more access to data further out into the institution. Now there are still some decisions on what data goes when, and following the lead of those lead offices to tell us what data we put out there when.

Senator Daddario: Is there a timeframe on this?

Mr. Helm: It is a multiyear project. There is a lot of data that is sitting in Campus Solutions and the human capital management product. It is going to be an ongoing project, but there are defined timelines for each project that we are doing. We have to release then what we call release packages in terms of this is a distinct piece that we're moving out. It might be admissions or financial aid data. All of those have to be validated by the functional offices to ensure that it is correct. That can take a long time to go through it line by line. Not every single line, but enough to understand that it is the right data because we want to make sure we are putting the right data in.

Senator Daddario: But then it sounds like we could reasonably expect a recruitment reduction directly related to these IT problems.

Mr. Helm: I can't really comment on that. All I can do is tell you what we are doing to get the data into the system and what it takes to do that. It is not just copying data from one database to another and saying you have access to it. There are a lot of steps to do to the information for you in way that it can be used. Otherwise, it is just, you are just querying data and you don't know what it represents. Certainly I can talk to our partners about the concern in terms of the offices that we work with and get back to you more on what timelines would have the different information products.

Senator Kalter: There are widespread complaints about the hyper-granularity of the report data. That things we used to be able to query on the mainframe now we can't query because there is so much control of that information. We might want to look at this as one of the problems, that going back to more openness in terms of the information flow might be a good idea. That is a complaint I have heard from many people about having somebody else controlling data that they used to be able to get access to.

Senator Alcorn: I want to offer very public props to our staff at CTLT. I think they have been doing a marvelous job in helping us deal with the ReggieNet issues over the last number of weeks. I am wondering if we can prevail upon them again. I feel like we need to offer some solutions to the Discussion issue immediately. We have got online courses running and when you are talking about a fully online course, one or two weeks is a very significant chunk of time. If we can get CTLT to help us figure out alternatives to that in the meantime, whether it is googledocs, setting up wikis, I don't know what that would be.

Dr. Walbert: This afternoon, Claire and I talked about finding some alternative ways of getting a discussion type tool out there or more than one, but something that they vetted and liked well enough.

Senator Tamme: As a student, my biggest frustration with ReggieNet being down is from the beginning of the semester, my professors know that we expect these kinds of things and I ended up paying for two external websites just for discussion boards. That adds up when I am in a bunch of different classes, maybe in Gen Eds that require these discussion boards and I am paying monthly subscriptions for them when this could easily be used in ReggieNet. So I just want to stress the importance of the affordability part of that for the students.

Senator Kalter: Thank you everybody for this discussion and we will continue this kind of a forum as many times this year as we need it. I would also ask the Provost's Office to work with us on the question that Senator Powers brought up in terms of communicating to faculty when they should give students some extra time for things that they missed. I think that is going to be a communication issue going forward. So thank you very much to our guests and to everyone for their questions.

Chairperson's Remarks

Senator Kalter: Good evening, everyone. We have a full agenda and a Faculty Caucus after this meeting, so I'm only going to make a few announcements to start us out.

As chairperson of the Senate, I have been named to a committee appointed by the President to study the issue of "Unmanned Aircraft Systems," aka drones. The committee is chaired by the Associate VP of Research and Graduate Studies and the Director of University Marketing and there are representatives on this committee from the faculty, the student government, the Police Department, Environmental Health and Safety, Athletics, Risk Management, the Legal office, and the Dean of Students office. If any of you have or know faculty on campus who have special expertise, interest, research or teaching in the area of drones, research with drones, or aviation, please have them contact myself or John Baur so that we can best communicate and contribute to the formation of a policy or policies related to drones for the campus.

Pursuant to the discussion that we have just had regarding technology on campus, the chairperson of the Senate was named a few years ago as one of the individuals who sit on the Data Stewardship Council. The transition from Senator Holland's service on the Council to mine was delayed last year for a variety of reasons, but I will be attending a meeting of the Council for the first time on September 25. In that role, I will be helping the Academic Affairs Committee to assess a proposal from a faculty member for increased faculty and student input into university-level campus technology decisions.

A reminder that the Council of Illinois University Senates, attended by the chairs of public university Senates across the state to discuss shared governance in the state will meet this Friday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., in Prairie Room Center. You are welcome to attend all or part if you are interested.

With no state budget news yet, we will not have a formal budget session tonight, but if you have further questions regarding budgets, please feel free to ask our administrators during administrator remarks. Remember that three areas where faculty, students and staff can contribute their ideas are: expressing concerns about things that might be cut; offering suggestions as to things that perhaps ought to be cut; and offering ideas as to where we should be investing more of our monies for the future. I hope some progress is being made in departments and colleges where there might have been concerns about shared governance in budget planning. Please let us on the Planning and Finance Committee of the Senate know if you or your constituents have not found an outlet for your wish to participate in the shared governance around budget planning. Given the depth of the governor's proposed cut, please also be aware that department, school, and unit leaders may not be able to share as much information with you as you with them, as the personnel services portion of our budget would certainly not go untouched in any deep rescission.

Finally, we still have room for faculty volunteers who might wish to serve on the search committee for the Vice President for Student Affairs. Please ask any interested faculty to contact the Senate office by next Tuesday.

I would be happy to take any questions.

Student Body President's Remarks

Senator Powers: Last week, myself and other students joined the State Treasurer to urge the General Assembly and Governor Rauner to fund MAP Grants.

I also met with Senator Barickman to discuss college affordability and the possibility of making textbooks tax free. We also discussed the possibility of Rep. Brady and me to have a forum on campus where students can meet their representative and ask questions about the budget or other issues.

I will be meeting with the Illinois Secretary of Education on September 21st. Connor Joyce and Marques Thornton will also join me.

Senator Barickman will be helping me to get a meeting with Governor Rauner this year. I will discuss MAP grant funding, college affordability, and the tax free textbooks.

It's On Us Campaign's first event will start next Monday. We are teaming up with Women's Gender Students and other organizations for the event. Starting at 6:00 p.m., there will be a showing of the *Hunting Ground* followed by a panel discussion. Please let your students know.

House Call for students will start next Monday and end Thursday. House Calls are when faculty and staff go around the dorms to talk to new freshmen and see how they are adjusting to college life. I encourage the faculty and staff to volunteer to for this great opportunity. I know as a freshman I would have appreciated this. You can go to the housing website to find out more information. Registration closes Friday.

Pig out with the Prez will be on Sept. 22 in the afternoon. This year it will be on the quad. SGA is cosponsoring the event with UPD, ARH, and SAC.

Administrators' Remarks

- ***President Larry Dietz***

President Dietz: Thanks to everyone for getting this semester started with another stellar group of incoming and returning students. I also want to thank everyone for your good work that has resulted in another terrific ranking in *U.S. News and World Report*. We are number 79 on their list, which is quite a stellar performance. I was on a conference call today with the other university presidents. When I asked if anybody had heard about the 2016 budget, there was a pregnant pause, so I really don't have anything to report on that. I will be meeting with Secretary of Education Purvis and Tim Nuding, the governor's chief budget officer, and three other presidents are going to Springfield on Friday. The major topic of that meeting will be the funding of MAP. You will hear more at my University Address.

Senator Cox: In our last meeting, we were informed that on the continuum of possible budget cuts, we are looking at a possible 8% all the way up to 37%. We don't have any hint as to which direction that may go. Is that correct?

President Dietz: That is correct.

Senator Cox: Our dean has requested our chair to budget for a \$41,000 cut. He said that was premised on the high end. At what point will administrators have to actually make cuts?

President Dietz: I don't have an answer for that. The governor's proposal of 31.5% hasn't been ruled out. I would say it is going to be between 8.5 and 31.5%. The only real scenarios that we have come up with administratively are the same scenarios that we were asked to prepare by the state. We have encouraged folks to be very conservative about filling positions. We have centrally not told folks what to cut.

- ***Provost Janet Krejci***

Provost Krejci: We have a total enrollment up 1%. GPA and ACT continue to remain strong at 3.4 and near 24. We have 200 students with an ACT of 30 or higher. Increase in Hispanic students of 8%, increase in African-American of 6%. We are also up in transfer students, an increase of 31 students. We have 77 more new graduate students, an increase of 9%. We are going to be focusing on retention and look at ways staff and faculty can retain our students.

I want thank Dr. Charles Thompson and the Wren Crew for hosting me. The Wren Crew invited me out to see their work there. It is really wonderful work. Thanks to WGLT who hosted me for a visit. Again, phenomenal work for what they do for our university. Thanks in advance to Food Sciences for the new culinary lab that is opening. The Festival of India will be on the quad this Sunday. We said goodbye to Dean Jeff Wood in retirement. We thank Dr. Jan Murphy, who stepped in as the interim dean; she will be the interim dean for two years because we have several searches going on this year. We cannot have a great university if not diverse. I want to emphasize the importance of bringing in diverse candidates.

Senator Mogbogu: I want to confirm the percentage of graduate students that were enrolled.

Provost Krejci: We have a 9% increase of graduate students. The number of graduate students is 2,285.

- ***Vice President of Student Affairs Brent Paterson***

Senator Paterson: You should have an email from me regarding Helping Students Get Help Guide. Sometimes you have students with issues and you are not sure where to turn to. That is the purpose of that guide to direct that student to get help on campus. I don't know how many of you have had the mumps, but we are continuing to work with the McLean County Health Department on that. There are daily meetings to monitor the situation and we are working on contingency plans should it become more prevalent on our campus. When we become

aware of a student that has mumps or any other student that is going to be out an extended period of time, the Dean of Students sends out a notice to the professors that they will miss class for an extended period of time.

Senator Crowley: Do we have numbers on how many cases?

Senator Paterson: At ISU, we are only aware of one confirmed.

Senator Thurman: Does the Student Health Services provide booster shots for the mumps?

Senator Paterson: They do have the MMR vaccine and students can go to health services to receive that.

Senator Hoelscher: If we are notified, do we have a protocol to follow?

Senator Paterson: We are going to meet with the McLean County Health Department tomorrow as we are trying to work through those protocols.

Senator Lessoff: The media has been reporting on student counseling centers around the country about coping skills and an epidemic of anxiety. Is this a source of discussion in your office with counseling services?

Senator Paterson: That is not new. It is something that we have been dealing with. Over the past ten years, we have seen that increase. Student Counseling Services has been doing a lot to address that. They have been doing more online work with students—resources that are online, having them do some homework online and then talking with a counselor about that because we don't have the resources to individually meet with all of the students who would like services. Issues about anxiety that we see here are common to what other universities are seeing.

- ***Vice President of Finance and Planning Greg Alt***

Senator Alt: The state Central Management Services, which manages our health insurance plans, will be conducting a dependent eligibility verification audit called DIVA this fall. HR has sent an email to all faculty and staff with dependents enrolled in the health insurance plan regarding the audit. HR is prepared to assist in gathering documents for the audit and have established a separate email address for faculty and staff to use when requesting those documents. As indicated in the letter from the vendor, these documents must be provided on or before October 30th.

We do have several roof replacements underway. Julian Hall, Nelson-Smith, Hovey Hall and the Student Services building are all undergoing roof replacements. We expect that work will be completed this fall. There is also work being done to repair the deteriorated quad entrance at Hovey Hall. We will begin to upgrade restrooms and other space on the second floor of Hovey to enhance the visitor experience to the Admissions Office. Unfortunately, the condition of the underlying concrete was worse than expected when they began the project, so completion of that work will be extended well into the fall.

Senator Hoelscher: Concerning the audit, I was a little bit confused about some of the wording from HR where it talked about some of the documents could be carried forward. There is something about your spouse. Are we going to need to provide documentation?

Senator Alt: If you have a dependent, some of that documentation has already been provided, so they may be able to provide that documentation to the audit. For your spouse, you probably have not provided documentation. One example is to show joint ownership of a bank account. I don't remember all of the documentations, but I think that they are spelled out. There are several different types that can be done. For other partners, there are other types of documentation that are provided. HR can help you to identify the kind of documents you need.

Financial Exigency (Chairperson Kalter)

07.27.15.03 Timeline regarding recent Financial Exigency Proposals

07.27.15.02 Summary of Important Points in the AAUP Report

07.27.15.01 Governing Documents of the Illinois State University Board of Trustees

07.27.15.04 3.3.10 Termination Notification of Faculty

07.27.15.05 4.1.9 Disestablishment of Academic Units

07.27.15.07 Financial Exigency Committee Blue Book Description

08.18.15.02 Financial Exigency Definitions

Senator Kalter: I would like to open our discussion of the Financial Exigency materials and proposals that you received with a few words.

Financial Exigency is a term used to describe a condition that has occurred at some campuses around the country over the past half century and more, when the financial condition of the college or university becomes so dire that the permanent layoff of tenured and tenure-track faculty is contemplated.

I was the chair of the Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee for five non-consecutive years and am now sitting on the Planning and Finance Committee for the third time. In my judgment, Illinois State University has never been near declaring a state of financial exigency during my time on campus, thanks in very large part to the excellent work of its Vice Presidents of Finance and Planning, their staffs in the Budget and Comptroller's offices, and our University Presidents and their leadership.

We are able to have this discussion tonight, in the midst of another potential budget crisis caused by the decreasing support for the public funding of higher education, not because we are anywhere near that state, nor because we have weak shared governance structures with respect to Financial Exigency, but because we are stable and have much stronger shared governance structures and ethics than many other campuses in the country.

I hope you have all read both the timeline regarding the beginning of deliberations about this issue under Dr. Bowman, just before his unexpected decision to step down from the Presidency, and the summary of a longer American Association of University Professors report on failures in shared governance around Financial Exigency and program closures at other institutions. That report is available from the Senate office if you are interested.

Following last fall's discussion in the Executive Committee about tracking down where the issue actually stood following the resignation of President Flanagan, I consulted with the persons whom I consider the primary budget experts on this Senate: Dr. Dietz, Senator Alt, Senator Rich who admirably chaired the Planning and Finance Committee for 4 years, and Senator Lessoff who has sat on or chaired the Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee, also admirably, for the past 3 years. Each of us separately came to the conclusion that the specific proposal for a language change to the current Board of Trustees document, which is the ruling document, was probably ill-advised. In any event, also, President Flanagan should have consulted further with the full Senate prior to bringing or suggesting he would bring the issue to the Board of Trustees. His conversations with Senators occurred very early in his Presidency, before he would have had a sense of the traditions of shared governance on this campus.

The documents you have before you represent a combination of recommendations from myself—aided by the conversations with the four Senators just named; as well as former Senator Horst with respect to the university-

level policies that dictate what happens below the Board level when either financial exigency or program closure might be contemplated. I would particularly like to thank Senator Horst for her in-depth research on and attention to this important issue in 2012-13. While I would strongly recommend that we reject the suggested change to our Board-level document, all the other recommended changes are based upon AAUP observations and recommendations.

Following any comments these other four Senators would like to make, we will open the floor to further discussion and recommendations, including any recommendations about stability or change in the Board-level document.

Our discussion is aimed at giving the Faculty Affairs Committee advanced input into their deliberations this year regarding the proposed changes.

President Dietz: I will refer to this as the FE Policy and it is the Board's policy. Obviously, we are free to review, make suggestions, etc., but a policy is in place. We are a stable university. This issue is about closing the loop on an issue that has been around for a few years and not about any current fiscal challenge. As part of the discussion today that I had with the other presidents and chancellors of the other public universities, that term has not been used on their campuses. If recommendations are made to change the policy, I suggest the best practices model approach be taken with this. If there are suggestions, I would hope that any of those would allow us to have flexibility to administer whatever the state happens to throw our way in terms of the budget. It is still the Board's purview to either approve any suggestions from this body or from me.

Senator Rich: With ISU running 10%, 20% and 30% scenarios on General Revenue decline and yet being able to do it with minimal impact to academic departments and personnel, I think that is testimony to exceptional financial management, but it is difficult to see that the do no harm outcome of that kind of scenario being sustainable if that becomes an annual exercise. With regard to the AAUP memo and related materials, they highlight cases of dysfunctional management by crisis at a number of institutions around the country. Given ISU's strengths, direction and revenue mix, I am quite confident that our leadership has neither the desire or incentive to declare a false crisis. Their focus has been on steps to plan ahead to maintain institutional priorities while facing those challenges. While the president initiates the process, there is shared governance consultation and presents the condition to the Board of Trustees. I remain wary of major revision of the general policy for reasons Senator Kalter referenced and also my view that the status quo outranks many of the possible outcomes. There are many specific elements in the various documents here that may be in front of the Faculty Affairs Committee. As a member of Faculty Affairs, I will refrain from comment on any of those particulars.

Senator Lessoff: I want to support what Senator Rich has said. In thinking about this over time, I have become more aware about the do no harm position. Given the budget circumstances and people's anxiety about repeated scenarios of budget reductions, trying to revise the Financial Exigency Policy, which is as good as it is going to get. It will be a messy process. Probably the process we have is as good as any process that you could implement. You have to be pretty clear if you open this up that the result will outweigh the cost. I was not convinced of that, so my impulse is that this is one can of worms that we can leave closed. The Faculty Affairs Committee might take a different view of that.

Senator Alt: I would echo the chair's comment that ISU has not been near the state of financial exigency and assure that declaration of such a state is something that would not be taken lightly. In addition to the disruption of the academic mission, it could lead to other undesirable outcomes. My first concern would be that a declaration of financial exigency would be a threat to our credit rating. Student recruitment and tuition revenue would be negatively impacted to cause additional financial distress. It would cast a cloud over our perceived ability to offer quality instructional and support services. Our recruitment of faculty and staff would be impaired and retention would also suffer. The state's current financial challenges are no doubt a threat to our funding

resources, but we do have other compensating factors: stable enrollment and cash reserves to name a few. We are in our third month of our fiscal year without an appropriation from the state or receiving the remaining \$6.4 million owed to us from last year. Yet we continue to make payroll and pay our bills on time. Academic Affairs continues to offer the needed classes for our students. We have over 4,000 students dependent on the MAP grant assistance. Even though the state has left them hanging, the university has stepped in and held them harmless by covering this for them until the state finally does its job of passing a budget. Finally, independent credit rating agencies have continued to maintain our credit rating, which is two levels higher than the state's. We are one of only three public universities in Illinois to have a credit rating higher than the state. I can't predict the challenges, but I do believe that ISU's current financial status should be considered stable.

Information Items:

02.10.12.06 From 2014-15 Academic Affairs Committee: 4.1.3 Textbooks Policy –No Revisions

Senator Crowley: Our biggest concern was accessibility and we made no changes to the current policy as it stands.

04.10.15.01 From 2014-15 Academic Affairs Committee: 4.1.17 Classroom Disruption Policy – Revised

Senator Crowley: The revisions to the policy were changes in committee titles and rather minute changes.

04.10.15.02 From 2014-15 Academic Affairs Committee: 9.6 Policy on Student Computer Ownership – Revised

Senator Crowley: The most serious concern was accessibility. We were concerned that our students would not have technology available. Again, the title changes and updating it was the biggest concern.

04.10.15.03 From 2014-15 Academic Affairs Committee: 2.1.19 Verification of Student Identity Policy – No Revisions

Senator Crowley: There were no changes to the policy.

04.10.15.04 From 2014-15 Academic Affairs Committee: 8.5.1 University Library Policy – Revised

Senator Crowley: Some changes, but these were related to procedure and titles of offices, etc.

Motion XLVI-11: By Senator Gizzi, seconded by Senator Powers, to move the items to action. There was no debate. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion XLVI-12: By Senator Lessoff, seconded by Senator Thurman, to pass all items as a slate.

Senator Daddario: Looking at the Library Policy more closely, it is important that we consider the pronoun usage for transgender people. I see his or her listed.

Senator Kalter: We could ask Senators Lessoff and Thurman if they would accept that as a friendly amendment.

Senator Daddario: I think that the appropriate term would be “their”, as grammatically incorrect as it is.

Senator Lessoff: I am not going to accept that as a friendly amendment. I would rather have “that person's”.

Senator Daddario: With the transgender issue, it accommodates plural identities.

Senator Lessoff: The other side of the argument is, even in good cause, you have to be wary about changing the language.

Senator Daddario: If we are changing the language to that, so why not change it to “their”.

Senator Lessoff: Changing language in the sense of accepted grammar, I think that you have to be careful about doing that. So to change “his or her” to “that person’s” would not be revising the grammar for that purpose.

(Speaker not identified): Could we change it to “that individual’s”?

Senator Lessoff: That’s fine. This shouldn’t be taken as something that is not sympathetic to the people, but there are other principles involved.

Senator Kalter: The main issue is that Senator Lessoff is not accepting the “their” as a friendly amendment. He would accept “that individual’s”. Senator Thurman, would you accept that?

Senator Thurman: Yes.

Senator Kalter: We can look for the his/hers in each of these policies throughout some of these policies. Would you accept to do that for all five policies?

Senator Lessoff: I am not happy about it. The implication is if you don’t accept this particular wording change, then you are not sympathetic to the issues that transgender people face.

Senator Daddario: That’s not the implication. The implication is, in the cause of diversity, we put into practice a language that includes all people. The only issue is the his or her binary, which needs to be overcome in some way to include transgender people. So there is no implication about what the writers of this language think. It is how could we could move past the his or her binary.

Senator Gizzi: The issue is an important issue. I don’t think that this is the proper place to have that discussion. I think that discussion should probably happen in Rules for future policies on how we address the issue of transgender.

Senator Kalter: Rather than debating these policies piece by piece, that we move Senator Daddario’s concern to affect all policies. Would that be acceptable Senator Daddario?

Senator Daddario: Yes.

Senator Kalter: Would you withdraw the request for the friendly amendment for these so that we can pass these right now?

Senator Daddario: Yes.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Committee Reports:

Academic Affairs Committee:

Senator Gizzi: We discussed the procedural non-policy change by the University Curriculum Committee, which is deciding to return to an annual catalog, rather than a biannual catalog with an off-year supplement. The UCC decided it took the same amount of work to produce the supplement as it does to produce an annual one. We then reviewed the task list. We considered the Textbook Affordability proposal brought by the Student Government Association. We made some recommendations to Senator Powers, which we will consider at our next meeting. We discussed the proposal from a faculty member to develop a committee to advise Administrative Technology on faculty and student concerns. We are inviting that faculty member to speak to

the committee and flesh out a possible proposal. We also have decided that the intended ReggieNet survey will not be implemented until ReggieNet has been stable for at least three weeks.

Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee:

Senator Lessoff: The committee reviewed its agenda for the year. We had as our guest Tammy Carlson and Janice Bonneville from the HR Department. We discussed some issues that came up in the aftermath of the Employee Assistance Program that we passed last year and discussed possible amendments to that. Then we discussed it more at length and passed revisions to the Sick Leave Policy, which we will be presented as an Information Item next time.

Faculty Affairs Committee:

Senator Bushell: We reviewed the Athletics Council Report, along with the Ombudsperson Report and a few others with a little glitch of not having the right document to look at. We tabled that for the next meeting. We tried to prioritize our task list and the financial exigency might be first on our list next week.

Senator Kalter: You will be chairperson for the fall. Do we have one for the spring?

Senator Bushell: We didn't confirm the second part as a group, but, yes, I am for the fall.

Senator Kalter: Do we have a secretary?

Senator Daddario: Yes, Senator Mattoon.

Planning and Finance Committee:

Senator Marx: I solicited suggestions from departments of the university on what they would like to hear in preparation of our writing the Institutional Priorities Report in the spring. We chose the obvious ones, university budgeting and instructional costs and revenues. This year we are going to get into Administrative Technologies and Academic Technologies, University Advancement, Student Affairs and fees, and enrollment management.

Rules Committee:

Senator Crowley: We confirmed the important role of shared governance. We looked at what was on our website regarding shared governance in the Academic Senate. Then we talked about the role of the Rules Committee. We prioritized our task list. We had an intense look at the CAST Bylaws and we had two guests, Jan Murphy and David Kopsell.

Communications:

AP Credit – Public Act 99-0358 Sense of the Senate Resolution (Senator Ellerton)

Senator Kalter: The state legislature has passed a law forcing universities to accept 3s in AP credit for credit at universities. You have a senate resolution about that. Rather than debating that tonight, given the hour, we would like for you to read it through and consider the issue. We will discuss that one the next time that we meet. If you have any friendly amendments to that, send them to the Senate Office or directly to Senator Ellerton.

Distinguished Professors Memo – Call for Nominations/12/9/15 Faculty Caucus Endorsement Request

Senator Kalter: We have a memo from the provost about Distinguished Professors. You can read that through as well, just letting people know about being able to apply for Distinguished Professors.

Provost Krejci: This policy is going through Faculty Affairs right now and we are aware that there is a little misalignment between the policy and the practice, but we agreed that we would continue the same process this year until the policy was finalized.

Adjournment

Motion XLVI-13: By Senator Hoelscher, seconded by Senator Gizzi, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.