

President's Panel
Thursday, March 21, 2013
Faculty Senate Conference Room
2:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Mary Ellen Mazey, BGSU President; Lisa Mattiace, Chief of Staff; Sue Houston, Vice Provost; Mark Earley, Faculty Senate Chair; Sheri Wells-Jensen, Faculty Senate Vice Chair; Elizabeth Wood, Faculty Senate Secretary; Amy Rybak, Faculty Representative; Thomas Siebenaler, Administrative Staff Council (ASC) Chair; Faith Olson, Classified Staff Council (CSC) Representative; David Sleasman, Graduate Student Senate (GSS) President; Alex Solis, Undergraduate Student Government (USG) President; David Neely, Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Vice President.

President Mazey responded to a series of questions that were submitted prior to the meeting. The questions and responses follow.

Is the University (President's Office) willing to allow doctoral students an alternative to the custom-made robe (brown) for a possibly less costly alternative (black)? Or is tradition and appearance leaning toward the custom-made robes (brown)? (GSS)

President Mazey indicated that she was interested in ensuring that the students had all of the information needed and asked Lisa Mattiace to meet with the students. As a result of that meeting, representatives of the BGSU Bookstore were asked to document prices of regalia at other institutions and to provide prices for alternatives for the custom regalia now used. Students also surveyed other institutions to obtain prices of regalia.

President Mazey emphasized that enabling graduate students to participate in Commencement is the top priority. She added that when entertaining a special request such as considering an alternative to the traditional brown robe, BGSU must take care to avoid the impression that we might be changing our official school colors. We will not do that.

NOTE: The Graduate Student Senate voted to retain the current regalia and will provide financial assistance to students who may need help in obtaining the regalia.

In light of the recent goals for enrollment, has the idea of diversity become less important? (In a recent Enrollment Management Committee meeting, not one person of color sat at the table). (GSS)

President Mazey affirmed that diversity remains a priority for the University. She has created a broad-based, University committee to look at enrollment. This strategy was suggested by Noel-Levitz (consultants); and the committee is comprised of anyone who is central to the recruitment process, the retention process and the graduation rates. If there is not diversity on the committee, President Mazey encouraged those representing certain constituencies to look at expanding the group.

How might the proposed reduction of faculty and the increase of enrollment affect the quality of education at BGSU? (Faculty)

President Mazey indicated that there would not be a major impact because some of the reductions were actually in faculty administrators who were not currently teaching. Regarding class size, she commented that the reduction in faculty numbers could potentially add two to three students in

some classes rather than increasing class sizes by large margins. She also noted that the University will have to look at section sizes. As a university of 20,000 students, BGSU should not have sections that are less than 25.

Dr. Rybak asked about the class size in relation to retention. President Mazey said that she often asks students about this issue. She noted that class size isn't as important to students as the quality of the faculty teaching the class.

The University will do everything possible to guarantee that there won't be a negative impact on classroom experience. One example is providing access to faculty development programs when needed to ensure a quality educational experience, even in larger sized classes.

What are we doing specifically to make BGSU a preferred choice over other state universities, especially the four corner institutions that we are compared to so often?

(Faculty)

President Mazey responded by talking about the quality of academic programs. The University must continue to develop innovative programs. She noted that the College of Education and Human Development has a new "Inclusive Early Childhood Education program." This program is the first in the state. The new specializations in forensics science and biology and chemistry are additional examples. The University has two new master's degrees, one in education and the other in analytics.

Another strategy is linked courses. BGSU is scheduled to introduce linked courses in the fall of 2013. Linked courses will be offered to first-year students, the goal being to enroll approximately 70 percent of the freshman in three common linked courses. There will be two small sessions, meaning 20-25 students, and then a larger section of maybe 50 or more. This environment allows students to get to know other students, and that makes such a difference in retention efforts.

Dr. Rybak questioned whether faculty will be prepared to handle what might become a very different learning environment for students who are connecting more. How is the faculty going to be trained to work with the students who have suddenly become close friends?

Dr. Houston provided information on linked courses. There will be opportunities for faculty who want to get together and begin to collaborate, starting with a couple of opportunities this spring. We will continue to develop this concept into the fall; and certainly next year when we do this again, we expect to have a more robust system of support in terms of the faculty actually collaborating. There will be varying degrees of collaborations of faculty. Dr. Houston indicated that one level of collaboration could involve small steps such as coordinating the scheduling of exams and discussing how faculty are going to approach some content areas. Other faculty who teach linked courses – those who are interested in doing some pretty innovative kinds of things – may wish to collaborate on a deeper level. Dr. Houston said that the goal is to enroll 75 percent of the new freshman in linked courses.

Dr. Rybak commented that when BGSU first attempted to introduce linked courses with the BGX program, it didn't work well for a number of reasons including the lack of coordination. In her opinion, last fall's pilot was more successful because the small number of faculty involved worked closely together. She suggested that when more classes are linked, faculty may need guidance in coordinating with their colleagues who teach the same cohort.

President Mazey responded that communication between the faculty members is critical to success. Dr. Rybak said in addition that SuccessNet could help, but that there were limitations with SuccessNet. For example, guest students (all of PSOP and some international students) are not included in SuccessNet. Dr. Houston said she would investigate this situation.

President Mazey then explained her view that that an important aspect of maintaining quality at BGSU is recruiting the best possible students. She made the following observations:

- BGSU discounts tuition to attract students. The University provides about \$27 million of scholarship aid for students. About 10,000 students get some kind of financial aid from the University. The University must look at how we are doing that discounting and whether we are maximizing our yield of top quality students.
- We are trying to increase the quality of the freshman class; that should have a positive impact on retention. In our incoming class, the ACT scores are .4 to .5 higher than what they were last year. The discounting dollars should be distributed to enhance not only the recruitment of students, but also their retention.
- BGSU has signed 22 matriculation agreements with community colleges in the state. These partnerships will help to build the number of transfer students coming to BGSU. For example, we are currently trying to finalize a pathway program with Owens Community College which we will launch next fall. And that would be for students who applied here but initially couldn't get in. They could start at Owens and it would be like a dual enrollment and then transfer into BGSU after they had been successful at Owens.

President Mazey also noted that we intend to increase the number of international students at BGSU and pointed out that establishing personal relationships with prospective students appears key to successful recruitment. Responsibility for recruitment of international students has moved to Enrollment Management. We now have an assistant director and an international student recruiter. BGSU has done recruitment trips to Brazil, Taiwan and India and will soon be going back to China. In May, President Mazey will visit China as vice chair of an international forum at Beijing Institute of Science and Technology. That represents yet another opportunity to recruit international students.

President Mazey said that Jenifer Chambers has already developed a number of agreements with our international partners, but there are still opportunities. Our current students are helping us to recruit new students; and faculty, staff, and alumni are helping us recruit students as well.

Dr. Wells-Jensen asked about possible plans for the support of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for international students. President Mazey said that the University has been trying to determine how to establish a good program as far as English as a Second Language. Right now, the University contracts with the Language Company. Staff members are looking at possibilities for providing ESOL support when the current contract expires. Dr. Wells-Jensen followed up by asking about the status of those negotiations. Dr. Mazey did not know the details and suggested that this topic be discussed at a future Faculty Senate meeting.

Dr. Wells-Jensen mentioned that – while we do have in-house support for the students who enrolled with a 70 or 80 TOEFL score -- they still need significant language support in order to survive. President Mazey observed that, in her experience, language support is often begun in the summer prior to enrollment, sometimes including 3 to 4 days of travel with a language teacher to enhance students' language skills while visiting points of interest in the United States.

Faith Olson commented that addressing plagiarism is critical. International students do not always have the same understanding as domestic students. Dr. Wells-Jensen noted that this issue is specifically covered in every ESOL program. Dr. Houston added that it is also covered in graduate student orientation. There was a discussion about plagiarism and how best to handle it.

USG President Alex Solis asked if additional steps are planned beyond the modest increase of .4 or .5 percent in ACT scores already mentioned. President Mazey said that the original idea was to increase it by .2 percent per year. When she arrived, the standard was an ACT of 22 and now the goal is to get the average ACT to 24.

How will you communicate BGSU's priorities to give students, faculty, alumni, and the community a clear vision of what type of university BGSU is and will be in the future?

(Faculty)

Proposed revisions to the University's strategic plan were distributed. President Mazey indicated that she continues to stress the importance of the strategic plan and the University's goals. As she is invited to give presentations and remarks at various events, the remarks often are focused on the strategic plan. The monthly email to members of the BGSU community (faculty, staff, students and alumni) is an excellent way to communicate the message.

Dr. Rybak asked about any marketing and communications websites or other kinds of presentations to help tell our story. President Mazey said that the website, our primary means of "selling" ourselves, is being totally redone. Now each college has their own communicator from Marketing and Communications to get the news stories out so that we always have news stories talking about points of pride for BGSU.

The new positioning statement is a result of interviewing students, parents, faculty and others. BGSU is unique because of its commitment to students' success. BGSU is committed to the personal, hands-on learning experience and to developing the skills and knowledge to reach students' personal and educational goals. Part of our vision is to provide every student with the opportunity to partake in a co-op internship or some type of experiential learning.

Elizabeth Wood commented on the goal about graduate education. She said that three to four years ago there was a state directive that BGSU was to focus on undergraduates. She asked if this directive has changed at the state level. President Mazey replied that the state is not currently emphasizing that idea. BGSU wants to have doctoral programs and needs to build strong graduate programs. The University may not have a wide array of programs like OSU, but we do have many highly-rated programs. For example, the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program was just named third in the country. She commended GSS President Sleasman and others who worked on the development of the Graduate Strategic Plan and also expressed satisfaction with incorporation of graduate education as a goal within the revision of the University's strategic plan.

Does the BGSU administration support the Governor's workload proposal? If it becomes law, will it be used to increase BGSU faculty workloads? (Faculty)

President Mazey indicated that she takes the same position that the IUC has taken on the proposal. The IUC says the wording addresses teaching, but faculty workload is more than just teaching. She also said that the University should be assessing how we compare to our peers.

Dr. Rybak questioned the potential effect on tenured and non-tenured faculty. President Mazey responded by saying that we need to address workloads across the University and how we

compare to our peer institutions. Dr. Rybak followed up by asking if there was work being done on this. President Mazey responded that everyone was focused on the contract negotiations and that benchmarking was probably more of a summer project.

Can Inter-University Council (IUC) make the determinations for Affordable Care Act requirements state-wide, as opposed to each institution having unique requirements? (CSC)

President Mazey presented information prepared by Rebecca (Becca) Ferguson, Chief Human Resources Officer. Dr. Mazey suggested that BGSU needs to develop an approach that is not only in compliance with the law, but also is appropriate to our culture.

Alex Solis asked for clarification of what IUC stands for. Dr. Mazey explained that IUC is an organization of the 13 Ohio public universities plus Northeast Ohio Medical University.

Follow-up on AS Morale Report, have any new resources been identified or developed from your office or Cabinet members and their offices? (ASC)

President Mazey indicated that until the state budget is finalized, there would be no new allocations made. BGSU may have a \$2.7 million reduction in SSI starting July 1. President Mazey mentioned that there were no objections raised in response to the report on morale presented to Cabinet by Administrative Staff Council Chair, Tom Siebenaler. The President's Office, Human Resources and several offices have been supportive of proposals stemming from five specific points addressed in the report.

On the topic of outsourcing/merging with outside agencies and BGSU, (most recently with the Health Center and BGSU Airport operations) are there any future plans (next 5-10 years) to merge/outsource in other areas/departments? (ASC)

President Mazey said that there were no plans for further outsourcing. These projects have just evolved out of their various areas as an effective way to decrease costs without affecting the quality of operations. In the end, we need to be mindful of the cost of higher education to students. She noted that the renovation of academic buildings and new construction on campus is being achieved without any additional cost to our students. And she predicted that these upgrades will be a major recruitment tool.

What effect does the newly reached agreement in principle between BGSU Administration and the BGSU Faculty Association (BGSU-FA) have for staff (both Administrative and Classified)? (ASC)

President Mazey reminded attendees that in a unionized environment it is important to treat everybody -- faculty, administrative staff, and classified staff -- fairly and consistently. She repeated the University's intent to bring all employee salaries to market as benchmarked against peer institutions.

Do you foresee any ramifications that will affect the other constituent groups once the faculty union contract is signed? (CSC)

President Mazey does not see any ramifications for the other constituent groups.

Elizabeth Wood commented on the problems of computing faculty salaries. President Mazey noted that salaries will be determined by rank and by discipline.

Faith Olson asked about a possible reduction in staff to allow the University to fund the salaries for faculty. She commented about the outsourcing of security on the doors of labs. President Mazey had not heard about this situation, and noted that she had no plans to reduce positions.

But, as the University continues to benchmark, changes may occur in the future. New positions may call for greater knowledge and skills in certain positions formerly held by classified staff.

President Mazey commented that open positions both at the staff and the faculty levels must be reviewed and strategically filled. In prior years when there was a significant reduction because of a one-time University Employee Separation Plan (UESP), instead of strategically allocating faculty positions, academic departments expected all vacated positions to be filled.

In today's higher education environment, we must focus on the budget and on our needs in specific areas. SSI is now weighted toward the number of students who graduate as well as other criteria. Accordingly, BGSU must focus on retention and completion rates (graduation) as well as on recruitment. It's up to everybody and not just enrollment management personnel.

President Mazey noted that by the 2013-2014 academic year, BGSU will have reduced the number of faculty positions. In addition to non-renewal of some one-year contracts, the reduction is being achieved through retirements and voluntary separations. Hopefully there will not be additional position reductions in subsequent AY's. But given the volatility from year to year of SSI as determined by the new formula, the University will need access to some type of reserve fund for meeting financial obligations such as salaries.

President Mazey would like to hear a conversation about trends and conditions that can change the whole landscape of higher education such as the popularity of massive open online courses (MOOC's) and their impact on campuses like ours. Providing that BGSU embraces the fast pace of change in higher education, we can compete with other institutions.

Mr. Solis commented that students have seen a significant increase in tuition. President Mazey said that we all need to be thinking about the students and limiting their costs where possible without sacrificing the quality of a BGSU education. One of her goals is to increase revenue for the University. For example, she is exploring the possibility of a hotel/conference center near I-75 to bring more events to BGSU. When an outside entity to develop the site has been identified, this facility will showcase the University's programs without costing additional money.

Faith Olson asked about the new information from Human Resources relating to hiring students. Due to the Affordable Health Care Act, there will be a restriction on the number of hours students may work each week. Consequently BGSU may not be in a position to provide as generous a support package for individual students.

President Mazey was not able to detail final impacts of the Affordable Care Act on BGSU, which are still somewhat subject to interpretation. But she mentioned that an entrepreneurial attitude about utilizing campus facilities and staff over the summer in activities related to the academic mission of the University could go far to generate funds for hiring students.

President Mazey thanked the faculty, staff and students for all that they do at BGSU.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth J. Wood
Faculty Senate Secretary