Dear Colleagues,

As we enter the second half of the academic year, let me bring you up to date on some of the activities of the Faculty Senate over the past several months.

**Fiscal Year 2008 Budget, Faculty Salaries and Benefits**

As Fr. Biondi mentioned in his December Monthly Message, the President’s Coordinating Council (the PCC) and the various financial and business officers for the University’s many operating units worked throughout October and November on the operating budget for FY 2008. The Senate was involved in the process. We were able to compile a good bit of comparative salary data from the AAUP (for full time faculty, excluding those in Medicine and Law) indicating that SLU salaries, especially for the assistant and associate professor ranks, have fallen substantially behind those of other universities with which we might be compared. That information was presented to and discussed with the Provost and other University officers, and it served as the basis for a Senate proposal that the University augment its annual merit raise with the first increment of a multi-year salary “catch-up” initiative.

The Senate’s proposal also included a recommendation, repeated from last year, that the University transition our defined contribution retirement plan to automatic enrollment (with employees permitted to opt-out at any time). That part of our proposal, which arises out of recognition that over 10% of faculty and over 30% of staff are not enrolled in the existing opt-in retirement plan, has the support of the Staff Advisory Committee and, we believe, is endorsed in principle by the Office of Human Resources.

The Senate’s proposal was based on recommendations from our Compensation and Fringe Benefits Committee, chaired by Joyce Dana, and it incorporates priorities expressed in last spring’s salary and benefits survey conducted by that Committee. The comparative salary data underlying our proposal was compiled by Mark Knuepfer, the liaison to the Committee from our Executive Committee. I can report that the Provost’s Office has gathered comparative salary information consistent with that prepared by the Senate and that there seems to be general recognition among members of the PCC that faculty salaries need to be raised.

The basic outlines of the FY2008 operating budget will be made public later in the month. Provost Joe Weixlmann and VP/CFO Bob Woodruff will present it to the Faculty Senate at our Tuesday, January 30th meeting, which will be held from 3:30 to 5:30 pm in Busch Student Center, Rm 170. The budget presentation, which is expected to include information about new academic initiatives in addition to FY2008 tuition, fee, and salary figures, should begin about 4 pm. All faculty are invited to attend.

On a related topic, we would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Office of Human Resources on the implementation of a much improved dental insurance plan. Last spring’s faculty survey identified upgrading dental insurance as a benefit priority just behind maintaining University support of health insurance and the retirement plan. Adoption of the new dental plan speaks to the ongoing constructive relationship between Human Resources and our Compensation and Fringe Benefits Committee.

**University Endowment and New Senate Ad Hoc University Development Committee**

Because of greatly improved investment returns, the University’s endowment has increased substantially over the past several years. You will have noticed from Fr. Biondi’s Monthly Message for November that it reached $825 million by July 1, an increase of $75 million for FY2006. Chief Investment Officer Bryan Pini reported at our November Senate meeting that, with additional good investment results, the endowment has continued to increase nicely this fiscal year. All of us can only be pleased by these
For the past few years, however, the contribution from endowment resources to the University’s annual operating budget has declined, from about 12% of the budget ($53.6 million) in FY2001 to about 6% (around $32 million) in FY2006. The reason, as both Fr. Biondi and Bryan Pini have explained, is that the University has reduced its endowment spending rate from over 7.5% in FY2001 to less than 5% for this fiscal year. We do not disagree with this action. The reduced endowment spending rate is based on reasonable assumptions about expected investment returns and about expected inflation; it is fiscally prudent. The bottom line, though, is that unless new money comes into the endowment, it is likely to contribute an ever declining share to the University’s operating budget and, in the absence of a substantial increase in revenues from other sources, operations of the University are likely to become even more dependent on tuition revenue.

During the past several years, we in the Senate have been discussing this situation with University financial and development officers and others. We support University efforts to find creative ways to generate revenue beyond tuition. Indeed, we have come to see that the surest way over the long run (a decade or more) to turn around the University’s trend toward tuition dependence is to greatly increase the number and types of programs and activities that are supported by endowment funds. There is, of course, nothing new about endowment support for specific University purposes; consider, for example, the modest endowment funds restricted to generating revenues for certain scholarships or for specific academic chairs. But there are surely many more University needs, academic programs, service initiatives, etc., that might be attractive to potential benefactors. My favorite example has to do with the blood lead monitoring work with the children of La Oroya, Peru, which our Public Health faculty and students have been funding out of the School’s operating budget. Can there be any clinical activity that is more illustrative of the University’s mission than this? Might there be some alumn or friend of the University who would deem it worthy of support?

Happily, University development efforts have been moving in this direction. Under the new leadership of VP Tom Keefe, development officers have been assigned to all colleges and schools, and to the libraries. At our October Senate meeting, Keefe invited and challenged the faculty to identify programs, initiatives, and activities that might attract support and to work with development officers to make them known to potential benefactors. We in the Senate have taken up the challenge. We recently created a new Ad Hoc University Development Committee, with Executive Committee member Bill True as chair. We have charged the Committee to work with faculties of the various academic units and with development officials at the unit and University levels to identify ways by which endowment support for academic operations can be increased. This is a new and ambitious undertaking by University Development and by the Senate. It will need the support and help of many members of the faculty if it is to succeed. If you are interested in getting involved in the effort or if you have suggestions on how we should proceed, please get in touch with me or with Bill True.

**Travel Policy**

As I mentioned in my last communication, the Senate has been involved in efforts to improve the travel policy since last spring. Early in the fall, we discussed problems that faculty and staff have been having with the policy with VP/CFO Bob Woodruff, and we presented him with a 13 page document identifying and detailing 10 categories of issues and difficulties that have been brought to our attention. Since then, two members of our Executive Committee, Mark Knuepfer and Matt Mancini, have been added to a University travel advisory committee, and their suggestions for improving the policy have been well received. Indeed, in some respects, the policy has been improved. Reimbursements are now more timely and are made by direct deposit, for example; further, the roll-out of Amex travel cards has begun. But we know that there continues to be widespread unhappiness with University travel. In fact, Mark Knuepfer has been working on a web-based travel issues form that will allow users to identify travel issues and to provide constructive comments to improve the system on a nearly real time basis. We will advise you when it goes on-line.
Email Services
At our October meeting, the Senate approved a resolution expressing concern that existing email services cannot be operated in a manner necessary for University faculty to meet their educational and professional responsibilities and asking the Office of Information Technology Services to facilitate the adoption and installation of well-functioning email services as quickly as possible. Having met with Ellen Watson, Chief Information Officer, both before and after transmission of the Senate resolution, our Executive Committee believes that ITS has taken a responsible initial course of action in dealing with the email problems. For several months, ITS and an advisory committee with faculty representation has been identifying and studying replacements for the existing system. It is clear that making any such basic change is a substantial undertaking and will be very costly. We have also been advised that the technologies and economics of the provision of email services for universities and other large institutions are presently in a state of flux. Accordingly, an ITS approach that includes a commitment to expend substantial resources for a new system but which temporarily delays selection of the specific replacement until some of the uncertainties are reduced has seemed reasonable to us. We might think otherwise were ITS to have acquiesced in the plainly unsatisfactory condition of the present system. But ITS has not done so. The most pressing problems during the fall semester can be traced to an order of magnitude increase in the amount of SPAM directed to the system. ITS, in our view, has recognized the gravity of the issue and has made a credible effort to find interim solutions. In this regard, we are watchful and hopeful that ITS’ outsourcing of the front end of the email processing function over the holiday break will give us much improved performance.

Academic Integrity Report
It is my pleasure to inform you that the report, Comparison of Saint Louis University’s Schools/Colleges’ Policies and Procedures Regarding Academic Integrity/Academic Honesty Violations, prepared by our Academic Affairs Committee under the leadership of Cheryl Cavallo, has been posted on the Senate website HERE. The report (together with its appendices, which are available on request) presents an extraordinarily comprehensive and detailed picture of existing academic integrity policies, procedures, and practices at the University. Prepared as background for the fashioning and analysis of academic integrity policy initiatives, it includes important information about strengths (“best practices”) and recognized weaknesses in existing policies at the various academic units and it identifies topics of special interest and concern. Representatives from the Committee, the Executive Committee of the Senate, and the Provost’s Office will be meeting to consider the next steps towards improving the academic integrity climate at the University.

Academic Reorganizations
The Faculty Manual provides that the Senate (through its Executive Committee) be informed early in the process of the merger or reorganization of a college, school, library, or department, and that the Executive Committee oversee the adequacy of consultation between administrative officials and the affected faculty. During the fall semester, members of the Executive Committee were involved in monitoring and consultative capacities in two such matters: the merger of the departments of Psychiatry and Neurology in the School of Medicine and an evaluation of the major and other components of the Music Program in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences. In our view, each reorganization process was carried out according to the terms and spirit of the Faculty Manual.

As you can see, the work and interests of the Senate are wide-ranging. Across the scope of those activities, we will exercise the privilege and the responsibility of acting on your behalf to the best of our abilities.

Respectfully submitted,
John Griesbach, Faculty Senate President