To: ftpt_faculty@slu.edu  
Subject: Faculty Senate President's communication  

Apr 24, 2007  

Dear colleagues,  

As we approach the end of the academic year, allow me to bring you up to date on activities of the Faculty Senate and to inform you of several recent Undertakings. I will also take this opportunity to highlight some of the more important ongoing concerns and priorities of the Senate.  

2006-07 Faculty Senate Meetings  
As you know, the Senate meets monthly as a body of the whole to discuss and consider matters of interest and concern to the faculty, to be informed of important University activities and policies, and to pass resolutions or take other appropriate action with the full authority of the Senate. I have tried to describe many of the matters of faculty interest and concern taken up by the Senate in my occasional communications to you. I should also mention that all of our monthly meetings have featured at least one presentation about an important University operation or initiative by the highest level University administrator with responsibility over the matter, followed by what is usually an extended period of questions and discussion. This past year's Senate Meetings included presentations and discussions on the University's development organization and strategies, on the University endowment and investment practices, on the 2008-09 University operating budget, on University research goals, policies and procedures, on academic requirements and performance of University athletes together with an early-on assessment of our entry into the Atlantic 10, and on the strategic plan for the University library system. Today's April 2007 Senate Meeting will feature an appearance by the Provost to discuss a wide assortment of matters of concern to faculty, including faculty salaries, the year's various dean searches, and, no doubt, the University travel policy. In connection with these monthly meetings, we have found University administrators to be most willing to present to the Faculty Senate. Further, their explanations of University operations and initiatives have been forthcoming and transparent, often presenting a great deal of information. Also, we have found them open to discussion and questions of every sort. While not identified in the Faculty Manual or elsewhere as a component of “shared governance,” these regular sessions with senior administrators have been an important vehicle for developing a common ground of information and for communicating the kinds of concerns and perspectives that make genuinely constructive joint decision making possible.  

Implementing the New Faculty Manual  
As you know, an extensively revised Faculty Manual was approved last spring by the Faculty Senate, the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees. While many of the newly adopted University procedures and practices have been followed in spirit for several years, it is worth highlighting three important parts of the new Manual that were successfully implemented this past year. First, as mentioned in my January communication, the Faculty Manual's provisions for faculty participation in academic reorganizations and for Faculty Senate Executive Committee oversight of the adequacy of faculty consultation during such reorganizations were followed in letter and in spirit in the case of the merger of the departments of Psychiatry and Neurology in the School of Medicine and in the administrative 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. Secondly, a new section of the Manual calling for timely discussions between key administrative officers and the Senate’s Executive Committee upon Senate passage of a formal resolution about a matter of University-wide concern was used twice during the academic year. And as a third important development, the provision in the new preamble stating that the Senate is to be consulted prior to substantive modifications to University policies and benefits referenced in the Manual has been extensively implemented. During the past year, the Senate (ordinarily, through its Executive Committee) was consulted on the following University policies (many of which are not final):
As you see, the number of policies and University practices for which Senate consultation has been solicited is large, and their range of subject matters is wide. Should you need to locate those that are final, you can find most faculty academic related policies on the Provost's website where there are also links to additional University policies.

**Faculty Salaries and Benefits**

As mentioned in previous communications, our Compensation and Benefits Committee compiled 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 a multi-year “catch-up” initiative. We believe that our efforts may have helped bring about a modest measure of improvement. On the basis of the budget presentation to the Senate in January, it appears that average faculty salary merit increases for 2007-08 will exceed this year's average increases, that those average increases will vary from as little as 0.2% for some categories of faculty to as much as 1.0% for other categories, and that the various categories will be identified largely on the basis of comparative salary data.

Given your overwhelming expression of concern about salary levels in last spring’s faculty survey, we will continue to press for improvement. Our Compensation and Benefits Committee has already begun the process of integrating 2006-07 AAUP salary information into their comparative studies. We have obtained some comparative data on medical school faculty salaries. We also have made arrangements to try to develop a common group of “peer institutions” with salary experts in the Provost’s Office.

In regard to benefits, the spring 2006 survey identified protection of our defined contribution retirement system’s 2-for-1 match up to 10% of salary and continued containment of medical insurance premiums and fees as top faculty priorities. Working primarily through our Compensation and Benefits Committee, the Senate will continue to address those important concerns. Also, as I’ve mentioned before, the Senate has recommended for two years that the University transition our defined contribution retirement plan to automatic enrollment (with employees permitted to opt-out at any time). With the recommended change
projected to cost over $1 million, it was again not included in the University’s 2007-08 operating budget. Instead, Human Resources has committed to making an effort to increase voluntary participation rates, especially for staff in the lower pay grades. We will watch those efforts, and, while we would be very pleased to be mistaken, we would be surprised to see participation rates improve appreciably without the University joining the national trend of shifting to automatic enrollment.

Faculty Senate Committee Activities
Much of the information gathering, study, and analysis that support Senate recommendations, initiatives, and policy positions is done by our standing committees. During this past year, our Academic Affairs and Governance committees, and, as you will have already noticed, our Compensation and Benefits Committee, have been particularly productive. Conversely, one standing committee – our Professional Relations Committee (PRC) – has been entirely inactive. However, given that the PRC’s main business involves investigating faculty grievances and hearing appeals from disciplinary actions, we are inclined to be pleased by that body’s lack of productivity.

After a year of information gathering and analysis, our Academic Affairs Committee prepared a report that presents a comprehensive and detailed picture of existing academic integrity policies, procedures, and practices at the different academic units of the University. As I mentioned in January, the report includes important information about strengths and recognized weaknesses in existing academic integrity policies and practices, and it constitutes important background for the work of a task force recently established under the auspices of the Provost’s Office that has been asked to consider the next steps towards improving academic integrity at the University.

Our Academic Affairs Committee has also called to our attention and has been monitoring the progress through the Missouri legislature of the so-called “Intellectual Diversity in Public Higher Education Act.” Though not itself applicable to private universities in the State, the statute, if enacted, would create serious concerns about academic freedom and institutional autonomy at State supported colleges and universities. In solidarity with our colleagues at those schools and out of concern that some effort might be made to extend the statute’s reach beyond the public sector, the Executive Committee has discussed the matter with the Provost and with University Counsel, and we are prepared to help in appropriate ways to defeat the measure.

On another topic, for the past year, our Governance Committee has been gathering information on governance structures, procedures and practices, and collecting governance rules and policies that are in force at the various academic units of the University. The Committee’s overall task is to build the kind of information base on faculty governance at the department and college, school, and library levels that the Academic Affairs Committee developed regarding academic integrity. And, along the lines of the academic integrity report, the Committee intends to prepare a report that identifies strengths (“best practices”) and matters of special interest and concern about faculty governance in the various units. Our expectation is that that report, together with links to the various academic units’ governance documents, will be posted on the Senate’s website, and that it will serve as background information which faculties of the different academic units could use when modifying or improving their own governance structures and policies. It is in connection with this undertaking that the Governance Committee is presently surveying all members of the faculty regarding knowledge and attitudes toward faculty governance. If you have not already done so, I urge you to complete the short survey by navigating here.

Finally, I should mention that the Senate, primarily through our Executive Committee, is early in the process of several new undertakings. In the wake of his presentation and discussion at our March Faculty Senate Meeting, Associate Provost Michael Dockter suggested that the Senate consider ways by which faculty would become more involved in shaping and advancing the University’s research efforts. We have also been asked by the Provost to consider how faculty could provide input into the University’s overall space-planning. And just recently, in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech tragedy, we have been asked by Kathleen Brady, Vice President for Facility Management and Civic Affairs, to participate in the University’s review of emergency and disaster preparedness procedures and practices. Our Executive Committee has made arrangements to enter into discussions on each of these overtures. And because
Senate undertakings in any of these areas would have us in new territory, any information or suggestions about how to proceed are most welcome.

We will be electing two new members to our Executive Committee at this afternoon’s Senate Meeting. Additionally, Miriam Joseph will be taking over as Senate President. While I will be staying on the Executive Committee for a year as Past President, this is my last communication to you. So I want to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have committed time and energy to the work of the Senate and who have given me so much support and encouragement over the past two years. Though I cannot name them here, I want to thank our Senators, committee chairs and members, many others from the University faculty, several students, and also the many University administrative officers and staff (to the very top) who have extended their cooperation and good will to our efforts. I want to specifically thank Mark Knuepfer, Matt Mancini, Bill True, Jane Turner, Jan Wilson, Rick Breslin, and Steve Fliesler, members of our Executive Committee during my tenure, whose guidance, wisdom, and hard work is reflected in nearly everything we have been able to accomplish. Also, I want to express my appreciation to two special people; first, to Provost Joe Weixlmann, for his collegiality and for the deep-seated respect for faculty and for people that has grounded all of his interactions with us; and finally, to Miriam Joseph, who, as a member of our Executive Committee and as Senate Secretary and President-Elect, has tirelessly given of her knowledge and skill and time and energy in furtherance of literally every task undertaken by the Senate during the last two years. There has never been a person more qualified to assume the Senate’s Presidency. And lastly, I want to thank you, my colleagues, for your support and for giving me the privilege and honor of acting on your behalf.

Respectfully submitted,
John Griesbach
Faculty Senate President