April 20, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

I’m not sure where the Spring semester went. Let me bring you up to date on Faculty Senate news and related matters before any more time passes.

University Budget and Academic Planning
I hope you all read Fr. Biondi’s monthly messages to the SLU community. Father continues to provide reasonably detailed informational summaries about the University’s budget and budget process, among a host of other things. One key point that I hope you’ve taken from these messages is that, despite the myriad of economic challenges SLU faces, our institution remains in a strong financial position overall. Yes, our endowment took a big hit—and when the economy turns around it will not magically and immediately be restored to its June 2007 level of $960M. But the good news is that it was at $960M prior to the downturn. Another bit of relative good news—perhaps in a twisted sort of way—is that the University’s draw on the endowment for the operating budget remains steady at 4.5% for the pooled endowment and 5.0% for the Health Sciences Center endowment. The positive side of this is that SLU isn’t heavily reliant on the endowment for support of its general operating budget. Institutions whose spend rates are in significant double-digits not only are drawing from their endowments at a higher rate, but are seeing both their endowments and their general operating budgets diminished substantially in these difficult economic times. Despite the budget cuts we are experiencing here at SLU (and I certainly don’t mean to understate them, particularly with regard to human resources), we are fortunate in that our budgetary shortfalls are relatively minor. Detailed information about the SLU FY 2010 Operating Budget and Endowments/Investments appears elsewhere in this message.

Late-breaking news: The latest edition of the St. Louis Business Journal (April 17-23, 2009) announced the winners of the publication’s 2009 annual “Best Place to Work” competition. As a recent Newslink message stated, “SLU is one of only three employers in the largest category and is the only educational institution to be listed among finalists of all sizes.” Drum Roll…SLU took 2nd place in the “Giant” category. What did those colleagues surveyed mention that resulted in this recognition? Our benefits, particularly tuition remission for employees and their families.

Academic planning occurs continuously, but the current economic situation and the need for budget cuts in all areas of the University (academic and operational) perhaps give it a different urgency and, again in that twisted sort of way, create a timely opportunity for us to look at what we do from a big-picture perspective. Hopefully you already know that the Provost has asked the deans and directors to provide him with academic plans by semester’s end. He’s looking for “concrete actions that can be taken over the next several years to strengthen our academic programming through strategic pruning, nurturing, and investment” given the economic realities. They should focus on “key strategic goals and operational actions that can improve your unit’s professional and economic health and development.” These academic plans are to be concise and incorporate general faculty input—beyond the deans and chairs—down to the department level, as well as administrative review. Further, the Provost asked for data to support the recommended priorities. In recognition of the fact that each of the schools, colleges, and libraries has its own culture and governance organization, no specific structure for faculty involvement has been mandated. If you’ve not yet heard about this initiative, please consult with the appropriate administrator(s) in your unit.
Task Force to Enhance the University’s Research Mission

In his role as Interim Vice Provost for Research, Dr. Raymond Tait is working collaboratively with faculty, administrators, and research administration staff throughout the University to explore ways in which existing research programs might be enhanced, synergies created, and new opportunities identified. Among the outcomes of these interactions was a proposal, initiated by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, for a research task force designed to develop a strategic plan that can be used to help facilitate the research success of SLU faculty. Dr. Tait and Provost Weixlmann strongly supported this proposal, which draws upon the research expertise and experience of faculty throughout the University (i.e., not solely in medical or science disciplines). Constituted in consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the task force reports to the Provost through Dr. Tait, who serves as an ex officio member, and Dr. Mark Knuepfer (School of Medicine), who serves as its chair. See the task force’s charge and a list of its members.

The deadline for completion of the task force’s work, which is already underway, is December 1, 2009. To date, the task force has conducted two open fora and developed a brief survey which is open to responses through Monday, May 4, 2009. Please take a few minutes to add your observations/comments/suggestions/questions to this dialogue!

Presentations on SLU FY 2010 Operating Budget and Endowments/Investments

The rescheduled presentations by VP/Chief Financial Officer Bob Woodruff and Treasurer/Chief Investment Officer Gary Whitworth finally took place on February 18th at a Faculty Senate-sponsored program. Provost Joe Weixlmann participated in the program, explicating on various points and responding to questions. G. Whitworth responded to the budget/investment questions raised at the December 2008 Senate meeting. Topics covered included:

- Budget Development Process; Key Elements of the Operating Budget
- Sources of Revenue; Expenses
- FY 2010 Budget Planning, including Context and Key Budget Assumptions (for both the St. Louis and Madrid Campuses)
- Enrollment; Proposed FY10 Undergraduate Student Term Bill Compared to FY09
- 5-Year History of Key SLU Tuition Rates (Undergrad, Law and Medical Schools, One-Year MBA)
- UMG Net Income Statement; Budget Concerns/Opportunities
- Endowment Objective; Spending Rate and Annual Operating Support; Endowment Gifts; Pooled Portfolio Returns and Asset Allocation

The presentation slides, excluding non-public financial information, have been posted on the Resources page on the Faculty Senate Web site.

Selected points:

- The academic deans were greatly involved in the budget planning process
- Tuition and related fees account for 72% of the revenue for the general operating fund
- Total compensation (salaries and benefits) account for 66% of the expenses
- SLU’s conservative approach to the development of the FY2010 budget is expected to avoid midyear budget recisions
- Turbulence of the financial and economic markets stresses SLU’s main revenue sources:
  - Enrollment – Concern about students’ ability to pay
  - Endowment – As of February 18th, stands at about $650M (down from $880M in June 2008 and $960M in June 2007) → Decrease creates pressure on the operating budget because, while the spending rate hasn’t changed, the base has decreased and so the endowment draw is reduced
  - Gifts – Major gifts have stalled; more, but smaller, gifts coming in (a potential positive for the future)
  - Research Funding – Hopeful signs at federal level
- School of Medicine share of revenues and expenses is about half of the University’s budget
- Implementation of electronic health records is a major capital commitment
Q&A Responses
- There’s been no conversation about changing any faculty/staff benefits
- Faculty who are promoted/tenured this year will receive increases this year and the UMG compensation plan will be followed
- SLU expects an 8% endowment return over a 10-year period
- In budgeting, administration looks out 3-5 years, but the Board of Trustees approves the budget one year at a time; a multi-year commitment model is under consideration
- Concerns about student access to loans are being addressed in a variety of ways

Guest Presentations at Faculty Senate Meetings
I want to briefly mention several guest presentations made at this year’s meetings. There were two presentations about development at the February 2009 meeting. Roy Ruckdeschel, Professor of Social Work in the College of Education and Public Service, is the faculty representative on the Board of Trustees Development and Community Relations Committee. He talked about his liaison role as well as the purpose and structure of the committee. Further, Roy emphasized the importance of faculty involvement in development activities and urged us to get to know our unit development officers and collaborate with them. Next, Tom Keefe, VP-Development and University Relations, provided an overview of giving activity in the current fiscal year. He noted that his office raised $42.5M last year and that while 08-09 donations had decreased 32% dollar-wise, the number of donors had increased by 20%. The bad news, besides the obvious, is that fewer large donations are coming in. The good news, however, is that more people are giving their little bit – and, perhaps when the economy turns around, they might continue giving to SLU in even greater amounts.

Also in February 2009, Tim Brooks, VP/Chief Information Officer, provided an update on ITS activities and accomplishments since July 1, 2008, when he started his current position. In summary, ITS is moving toward a more customer-focused orientation and is designing and implementing a new organizational structure. Faculty senators were asked to solicit feedback about current ITS concerns (or good things!) from their unit colleagues and send that information to the Senate EC for compilation and forwarding to Tim Brooks. Please contact your senators, if you’ve not already done so. Tim’s presentation slides have been posted on the Resources page on the Faculty Senate Web site.

Back in October 2008, Boyd Bradshaw, Vice Provost-Enrollment Management, informed the Faculty Senate about a variety of issues related to student recruitment, retention, financial aid and scholarships, and enrollment management infrastructure. He returned in March 2009 to provide an update, which was particularly timely given the events of recent months and national concern about the affordability of college in the current environment. Boyd reported that his division exceeded its application goal this year and that new freshman admits are higher now than this time last year. [Note: One month later, the figures continue to support cautious optimism about meeting our enrollment goals.] Boyd’s presentation slides have been posted on the Resources page on the Faculty Senate Web site.

Jean Gilman, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, presented information about this year’s applicants’ academic backgrounds and emphasized the important role faculty play in student enrollment because academic programs are prospective students’ main consideration. Cari Wickliffe, Assistant Vice Provost and Director of Student Financial Services, explained the ways in which tuition financing is being handled. There are some new initiatives, including the expansion of payment options and an institutional loan program.

A third new initiative is the SLU Emergency Scholarship Fund. It’s probably no surprise that the single most common reason that current students leave SLU is financial. That was true even before the downturn; it’s obviously a greater issue now. I’ve heard Tom Keefe say many times that participation truly is at least as important as the dollar amount of a contribution. Certainly, larger contributions are preferred, but it’s the fact of participation that sends the message. In this
case, the message is that SLU faculty and staff want currently enrolled students to stay at SLU and finish their degrees here. The goal for this fund is $500,000. More than half that amount has been raised already—and yes, members of the Board of Trustees have contributed, too. Please do what you can.

**Position of Vice President for Health Sciences**

In a special message emailed on January 13, 2009, to all SLU faculty and staff, Fr. Biondi announced that Philip Alderson, M.D., Dean of the School of Medicine, is taking on additional duties at the Medical Center and has been appointed Vice President for Health Sciences. Fr. Biondi’s message explained the rationale for this administrative change, the consultation process involved in considering the change, and how the new organization would be implemented. An attached Q&A sheet delved further into these topics and, in so doing, addressed practical matters anticipated to be of concern to faculty, particularly those affiliated with the Doisy College of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, and School of Public Health.

At the open forum held on January 15th, EC members Joanne Langan, Jane Turner, and I spoke briefly to various aspects of this administrative change. Perhaps most importantly, EC input was proactively sought. The EC supported this change following extensive consultation and discussion with the Provost, Fr. Biondi, the Executive Staff (VPs), and Dr. Alderson. Further, Dr. Alderson and other members of the administration are receptive to continued dialogue and feedback as the changes play out.

**SurveyDIG Online Course Evaluation System**

Acting upon faculty requests, the Provost’s Office formed a task force about two years ago to review and choose software to create and administer online course evaluations. Ultimately, SurveyDig was selected and installed, and piloting has been done with courses in departments of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Doisy College of Health Sciences, and the College of Education and Public Service. It is hoped that other departments will participate in SurveyDig in Fall 2009. Assistant Provost Steve Sanchez is forming a group of college/school faculty and staff to help guide the process forward.

Some important points:
- Faculty have been involved in this initiative from the get-go.
- The Provost’s Office has no plans to mandate the use of SurveyDIG specifically or the use of online course evaluations generally, but does want to provide interested faculty with a University-supported product.
- Access to course evaluation reports is controlled by a variety of user levels. That is, individual faculty can see certain types of data; the same is true of chairs and deans.
- There is *some* flexibility to adjust the tool for different types of courses within a department (e.g., lab and clinical courses, seminars).
- The goal for on-line evaluations is no different than for paper-based evaluations.

**Faculty Manual Amendments**

Given the current year’s extraordinary focus on the University budget, the EC and Provost have concurred that consideration of potential amendments be tabled until 2009-2010.

**Awards and Honors – It’s the Season!**

**The Last Lecture Series** – Timothy Lomperis, Professor of Political Science, was nominated by students and selected by a committee of faculty, staff, and students, to present the initial lecture of this rejuvenated program sponsored by the Division of Student Development and the Office of the Provost. Mark your calendar for Monday, April 27th, at 7:00pm in BSC 170/171.
John A. Slosar Shared Governance Award – Call for Nominations! – Nominations are currently being accepted for the Slosar Award. The purpose of this Award is “To honor and recognize a faculty member who has provided outstanding contributions to the advancement of shared governance at Saint Louis University.” You can view the Award guidelines, which include details regarding eligibility, criteria, and the nomination process, on the Senate Web site. This year, the Award subcommittee is accepting provisional nominations until April 30th; additional supporting materials must be submitted by June 1st. Contact subcommittee chair Jane Turner with your nomination!

Father Biondi’s Reception Honoring Faculty – Several weeks ago, all faculty received an emailed invitation from Fr. Biondi’s Office for a “President’s Reception” to honor SLU faculty. This event will be held on Monday, April 27th, at Boileau Hall from 5:00pm-7:00pm. Today is the deadline for responses so don’t forget to RSVP to president@slu.edu.

University Commencement – As you know, the University’s commencement ceremony will take place on Saturday, May 16th. Chaifetz Arena is a big place. It will be filled with our graduating students and their families and friends. Let’s honor our students with a strong faculty presence.

And Finally...
I'll bring this to a close given its belatedness…and the fact that I'll be writing once more prior to Commencement. I realize I've not made good my intention, stated in my September message, to write every 4-6 weeks, and apologize for that. I hope that the availability of so much information in the Senate meeting minutes and EC reports, as well as improved communication between the faculty senators and their respective units, have been helpful in the interim.

With best wishes for a productive conclusion to your Spring semester --

Respectfully submitted,
Miriam E. Joseph
Faculty Senate President