

November 5, 2003

Mr. Joseph Hildreth, President  
University Faculty Senate  
State University of New York  
State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Dear Joe:

Thank you for forwarding the resolutions passed during the Fall Plenary of the University Faculty Senate at Oswego. I am pleased, in this letter, to respond.

While I am disappointed that the Senate did not endorse the Memorandum of Understanding that had been developed by the discussion group, I recognize and respect the fact that the faculty considers that there remain issues that require further discussion. Therefore, as you have requested, we will pause in the implementation of the June Board resolution to address those issues and to build the consensus that we all seek.

We recognize that it is possible, as the faculty have proposed, for campuses to develop unique approaches to this initiative and that this diverse set of approaches could certainly be compatible with System goals. Indeed, the Senate's notion of 'University-wide campus-based assessment' is a helpful way of understanding this concept.

As you know, Chairman Egan indicated at the October Board meeting that he expects to hear back from us at the Board's January 27 meeting. At this point, I am inviting faculty governance bodies take the lead in developing a draft of a revised proposal which includes the goals established for this initiative:

1. An assessment framework for determining the growth in learning achieved by SUNY undergraduates in the building blocks of general education.

This framework should consist of a set of instruments administered at two points in time: close to the student's entry to the institution and at some later date when the student has completed this learning. The designated measures should include "externally referenced measures" — which I will interpret as either nationally or SUNY-normed — in addition to those already in place in campus plans. This, in my view, meets the goal for accountability.

2. A survey instrument that will provide for an understanding of the indicators that reflect the campus academic environment.
3. An analysis of the relationship between academic assessment results and these environmental influences.
4. An indication of how individual campus plans will be folded into the GEAR approval process, including the specific criteria that GEAR will use in approving them.

I will consider a proposal which meets these goals and enjoys the support of the Senate and campus governance for presentation to the Board in January.

I look forward to hearing from you by early January, 2004 regarding the faculty's proposal. Despite the recent difficulties, I am optimistic that we will succeed in developing a process that we all agree will address the important goals of this initiative and one of which we can all be proud.

Sincerely,

Robert L. King

Copy: Mr. O'Connor  
Dr. Salins  
Dr. Steven  
Mr. Henahan