BOARD RECEIVES, ACCEPTS MUNITZ REPORT

In a Board of Control session held Wednesday to accommodate the schedule of Special Consultant Dr. Barry Munitz of the University of Houston, results of the six-month study of the College administration and Board were reported. Munitz pointed out that significant credit is due both the President and Board for initiating the review, and stated that his evaluation was for the mutual benefit of both.

He also emphasized that the President's role is extraordinarily complex and difficult at any contemporary college.

Munitz gave President Jack Ryder a general vote of confidence and found many more positive than negative things, focusing on fixing particular areas where he saw a need for improvement. Munitz said that Ryder has accomplished his original assignment from the Board, which was to improve legislative relationships, strengthen dormitories and their occupancy rate, and to enhance the physical plant.

People have a general confidence in the president as a person and good feelings for his honesty, candor, integrity and commitment. He noted that the prestige and image of the campus and the community have been changed for the better, even though much work remains to be done. Remarkably strong and optimistic alumni and student support of the faculty was found in the study, and Munitz said he consistently heard about the faculty's commitment to the classroom and students. As a result, he said he is "optimistic about the potential for interaction between the faculty and Board and administration in the future".

Recommendations to the Board of Control included changes in the governing Board procedures and by-laws, so they will contain more guidance for participating in institutional concerns as well as specific Board objectives.

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Munitz felt that the Board is responsible for endorsing those policies which establish a general program statement for educational direction of the College. "If it does not know what the institution stands for and what it requires, and if those desires are not stated first to the chief executive officer, and then with and through him to the institution, there will be no stable basis for College progress, and no meaningful contacts for assessing the quality of institutional leadership," Munitz said.

He proposed a Board planning committee, supported by a president who drafts materials and analyzes options, to create the initiative for clarifying the College's mission.

He felt that each member of the Board must encourage public analysis of and response to basic policy issues. "They are ultimately responsible for the president, just as he is responsible to them. They have a right to expect timely information and firm decision-making; they must not and can not be in a position of cajoling, or subtly hinting for that information or for those decisions," he stated.

The Board must expect from the president a continuing clarification of his short- and long-run agenda for leading the institution, and a relatively specific timetable for accomplishing each major objective. When new areas of concern are raised, they must be followed up by the administration, and the results of such analysis must be presented at subsequent meetings and entered into the formal public minutes.

Munitz believes that the Board's operating procedures must encourage conversation directed toward institutional priorities and the quality of administrative leadership.

"Its responsibility is to test whether or not College objectives are appropriate, and then to test periodically the degree to which those objectives are being met," he said.

If this occurs, the president will be placed in a position to administer the institution within the basic planning and policy contacts approved by the Board. Indications of problems coming to individual Board members should be raised immediately with the president, privately at first, and at public public Board meetings if the nature of the issues warrants such treatment. He feels it is not how the Board gathers or receives its information generally which becomes a problem for the College, but rather what is done with that information once it is brought to their attention.

Munitz said the role of the chairman is crucial in structuring the Board agenda, so that it provides a context for consideration of policy issues. "He or she cannot be exposed directly by people on the campus to conflicting institutional pressures... the Board and its chairman must remain an ultimate recourse for appeal or revision of policy decisions. There are no longer circumstances at Saginaw Valley State College to justify an extraordinary involvement of the Board or any of its members in the administration of the College," he affirmed.

The Board can not be placed continuously in a position of mutual (i.e., flowing in both directions) suspicion or ambiguity, Munitz said. "The element of ambiguity will be avoided to the extent that the Board publicly debates policy alternatives and publicly provides direction to the administration for the implementation of policy decisions."

He stated that the president's leadership is crucial in educating and directing the Board, and "he must not be in the position of constant reaction rather than initiative."

If the Board role is to set policy, Munitz said "then it must articulate what it wants to know and it must periodically insure that its earlier requests have been met. The Board will be... an effective buffer and filter system which enhances the institution's relationship with the outside world."

To play its policy role, the Board must get its information early, in a concise form, and with the background required for analysis. It must have procedures which assure effective establishment and understanding of priority goals. He proposed that the administration should present alternatives to the Board before responding to major policy issues, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each, and then providing supporting material for its
Implications for the Board agenda were that materials should be prepared early, time must be set aside at meetings for the Board to discuss general strategy, to be updated on critical issues, and review the priority for institutional goals, and that Board meetings should not be so driven by the formal agenda that time is not allowed for ad hoc or emergency questions. The agenda should be established by the president and chairman, with at least one full week for study and informal exploration before the public meeting. Relevant reports from each standing committee should be included, or an informal discussion of committee deliberations undertaken close to the current meeting. "This depends on when committee meetings are scheduled. Some work must be done by committee, but the Board must know what's going on so it can test different models," he felt.

Each principal committee should be supported by the administrator most responsible for that function and the primary role for each committee is the education of the full Board. He warned that the danger of committee organization is over-specialization and he felt that a mechanism must be developed to bring committee material before the full Board.

Munitz also stated that there must be more people on the campus who serve as a candid sounding-board for the president and who can speak honestly with him about a variety of major policy issues. "SVSC needs a better faculty-administration-Board interaction. Too much separation exists now."

An up-to-date and comprehensive policies and procedures manual is needed. Only those Board members committed and performing should be considered for renewal, and there should be a detailed orientation process for new Board members. Board members should have some place on campus where they could visit with the administration or other constituencies or simply read and rest while preparing for meetings. In addition, the president's office should provide to all Board members a weekly summary of media references to the College.

Under the president's leadership, the Board can be placed in a position of initiating and then monitoring implementation of basic policies. They will feel comfortable that basic policies and specific solutions are being analyzed and implemented in a timely and consistent fashion if they have the opportunity to review carefully their own agenda as well as the president's. Ultimately there must be evidence that the Board has clearly defined expectations for the office of the president, including the periodic review of an agenda, which was defined as the Munitz Presidential Evaluation Document discussed at the Board meeting. A timely response from the president plus satisfactory resolution of major problems raised by any Board member will be to become part of the normal presidential evaluation process.

Recommendations to the president were that one of his prime responsibilities is as educator and organizer of the Board and that this flows in both directions. The president must provide an ongoing discussion of institutional priorities. He and his administrative team must demonstrate an understanding of budgetary processes, and provide for the administrators of the units below them a sense of meaningful control and authority over their fiscal operating responsibilities. This delegation must include a cost-benefit analysis of policy decisions made earlier by that administrative team. The Board as well as everyone else will have to accept budgetary limits, and
understand that "trade-offs" are required in a constrained resource environment. "We all must understand that if there was a time that the goal was to do as much as possible as well as possible, that time is now past. We must make tough decisions as part of the planning process," he emphasized. A service-oriented business office, working with a vital planning and budgeting system, is to provide a framework for a meaningful establishment of priorities.

Concerning the decision-making process, the President must design a process for participative governance which has realistic constituency involvement in decision-making, combined with a reasonable delegation of operational responsibility and authority. Particular use must be made of specialized talents available on the president's staff on a timely basis. "Even correct decisions which come late can undermine the quality of that decision itself. 'Chaotic procrastination' is something a modern president cannot afford. Constituencies, and the Board itself, must perceive that materials pass through the president's office in a reasonable period of time. . . the president cannot be seen as an administrator who buries or refuses to confront difficult decisions. . . a president at an institution this complicated cannot be expected to do everything himself," the consultant pointed out.

A legitimate flow of authority from the president to the vice president is necessary, as well as public support and accountability from each vice president to the president.

The administrative team is a small group of people working with the president in a candid decision-making process which utilizes constant testing and positive confrontation of issues. The team must apply sophisticated and consistent criteria to policy alternatives, and options must be explored in an open setting, with a hearing provided for unpopular positions. Each vice president must receive a balance of delegated authority which allows the establishment and review of priorities in each functional area. The team must operate in a "check and balance" environment, without a requirement of presidential involvement in every detail.

The academic vice president and the president now have an urgent need to use the faculty as a creative resource instead of assuming an adversary relationship, now that the new contract has been signed. "The president can demonstrate a comfortable and confident relationship with members of the faculty, and respond to their concerns with timely and publicly consistent replies, then they in turn can be asked to contribute positively to the College in an atmosphere of good faith and public trust."

In the area of public relations, the president is the ultimate representative of the institution, and sets a tone for key people in the community to exert an extra effort in building the financial and political support of the College. This external responsibility is harder to delegate and therefore requires more and more of the president's time. He must integrate the College into three local communities, but is not the sole individual who makes a difference in achieving community support. Several critical people inside and outside are required to provide cooperation and support so that political, financial and symbolic stability can be realized.

The question of academic organization should be studied under the guidance of the academic vice president and ultimately presented as a recommendation from the president to the Board, regarding the most efficient means of organizing to support the academic enterprise. A rigorous and systematic appraisal system for all principal staff would demonstrate the president's commitment to quality education and efficient administration. A more attractive environment must be created for secretaries, 68% of whom changed position during the past year.

There must be symbolic and substantive commitment to separate attention for student affairs, Munitz said. He indicated there is some question about the merging of student affairs and administrative affairs and that "further conversation" should take place between the president and vice president Gilbert.

An executive assistant from the president's office should be responsible for organizing his own work and for distributing paper promptly and efficiently. This person should organize the president's calendar, insist that he stay away from detailed involvement in minor issues, facilitate the delegation process, and follow-up specific assignments so that the president is not
held responsible for unavoidable delay. The right caliber person in this position could also serve crucial roles in relationships with external communities and in assisting the president's liaison/educational function with the Board. Munitz also indicated he is discussing privately with President and Mrs. Ryder the role of the presidential family on campus, including social, professional, presidential residence, and family expectations. Munitz praised the president, Board, College administration, faculty and student for their cooperative and constructive input during the evaluation. "This has been as useful and constructive an evaluation as I've ever participated in. I spent more time than I thought I would on the Board side, but many aspects there rest directly on the performance and functioning of the president."

He complimented both the Board and president for taking the "courageous step" of instituting the evaluation. "This administration has made many accomplishments and I am listing steps for improvement because of the optimistic feeling I have that a positive framework exists. It would be impossible to say positive things unless these were built on other positive things. SVSC can build and pull together," he concluded.

The Board then voted to accept the report and to adopt the recommendations to the Board and president as a formal agenda under the Board's responsibility. In addition, a report will be requested from the president regarding the status of each item of the report at the next and subsequent (if needed) Board meetings.

Representing the SVSC Faculty Association, its president, Janet Robinson earlier read a statement concerning the College's academic structure and the possible reorganization of academic units. "This reorganization is vital to all and everyone has a major stake. But, the faculty and administration are operating in isolation on the reorganization process... a meaningful dialogue and planning must occur to reduce problems of communication. We should be a group working toward a common goal and should sit together and move toward a common reorganization," she said. Attempts by the administration to present a reorganization plan to the Board on January 8 are too soon, according to her.

She proposed that a procedure be constructed for a three-way dialogue and that the January deadline be deferred to allow this three-way process to occur. After some discussion, it was agreed that this matter will provide an excellent opportunity for the framework proposed in the Munitz report to be tested. It was agreed that the administration and faculty will meet together for as long as required to reach a mutually acceptable recommendation for the proposed reorganization. When both sides are comfortable with the compromise, they will come to the Board so that a resolution can be approved. Dr. Robert Yien, academic affairs vice president, stated that the reorganization process started November 6 with the resignation of Dr. George Harmon and that the recruitment season for prospective new deans will soon be over. Because of the time pressure, he admitted that he possibly moved too quickly but that timing is indeed critical. While Board member Dr. Helen Suchara felt that January 8 was an "unrealistic deadline", Mrs. Florence Saltzman proposed that the discussion be "left to the groups. Go to it!" she suggested. One common agreement was that additional meetings will be taking place and that the Board may call a special session before its scheduled February meeting.

Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid Paul S. Gill discussed credit-hour distribution of current financial aid recipients. This fall, 1215 students, or just about exactly half of those who are qualified for financial aid, are receiving some type of assistance. The average financial help is about $1160 and in all, some $1.7 million is being distributed here.

The North Central Association accreditation team will be coming to campus on April 17 and conducting its investigative visit on April 18-19. Chairman will be Dr. Schultz, dean of the graduate school at the University of Iowa.

Finally, the Board approved a resolution commending the College cross country team for finishing second in the NAIA cross country competition and to runners Rob Bostater, and Duane Johnson for receiving All-American honors. Coach Douglas Hansen was also praised for his continuing achievements.