



Board Report
03-17-17

Alan Marble

Board Retreat – As mentioned before, as part of our Strategic Planning process we need to plan a Board Retreat to consider the existing Mission, Vision, and Values statements. However, synchronizing calendars has become problematic and it now looks like the best time would be prior to the Board of Governors meeting on June 14. If possible meeting from 9:00 am until noon might be ideal. Please contact Sharon Odem if this time and date will not work for you.

Budget – Obviously, the item of primary concern to everyone in the higher education community is the continuing battle to retain some reasonable level of state funding. And, just a couple of days ago we learned that some of our local representatives were instrumental in voting a bill out of the House budget committee that reduced the core budget cut to regional universities like Missouri Southern to 6.8% rather than the 9% cut recommended by Governor Greitens. They also reintroduced funding for the Dental school cooperative between UMKC and MSSU, however at a reduced amount (\$1.5 million dollars versus the \$3 million requested, with \$1 million for MSSU and .5 million for UMKC). We will make every effort to increase this amount in the Senate and the hope the Governor signs a bill into law that will allow the Dental School initiative to move forward.

Yours to Lose – We have had an outstanding group of applicants for the initial class of Yours to Lose Advanced Medical School acceptance program, but we are finding it difficult to compete with the lofty scholarships offered by other better funded pre-med programs. These are very high performing students so they are highly sought after by all universities – including some very private and very well endowed universities. But, we are developing strategies to compete with the elite and often semi-ivy league institutions.

Liberal Arts – While it's appropriate and currently very popular to focus on higher education's role in workforce needs and economic development, we should never forget the importance of the Liberal Arts in helping develop graduates that are well rounded, civically minded, and socially responsible citizens. While our liberal arts curriculum continues to do a predictably great job, we should take a moment now and then to tip our caps to the faculty dedicated to teaching and scholarship in literature, philosophy, poetry, and the social sciences because they are truly the pillars of a free and open society. Frankly, there is little value in training students to make a living, if they are not educated in the various ways to appreciate and contribute to the world in which they live.

Visual and Performing Arts – In my view, the visual and performing arts are simply extensions of the liberal arts and serve the same purpose... to help develop a more refined and cultured world in which to live. This month we were treated to a couple of delightful examples of this development in action.

First, we unveiled a beautiful new mural in the Library that was created by students but supervised by our terrifically talented Art Department faculty. I would encourage everyone to visit the library to see the wonderful mural that now graces the south wall just inside the main entrance. It is a very impressive display of insight, perception, and wonder that will inspire generations to come. We are very fortunate to have such talented students and mentor-like faculty to give us these gifts.

Second, we are uniquely blessed to have one of the premier Music Departments in the region. You are all aware of the terrific talent displayed by our vocal music ensembles but in a few moments, you will get a glimpse of the awesome power of our instrumental music program as demonstrated by our Trumpet Ensemble. And, these are just a few of the talented performers that make up our instrumental music program. Please make plans to see our Orchestra, Jazz band, Pep band, or any of the myriad performances by soloists or other groups. These musicians are an awesome inspiration and we are very proud of them. You will hear more about the Music Department later in the meeting.

Great Game – The Great Game of Education continues to move forward even in the face of state budget cuts. In fact, the prior work of the Great Game Culture Committee and sub-committees has served to blunt the impact of the budget cuts of last year and the proposed cuts for next year.

Even more exciting is the work being done to develop a new and comprehensive student tuition and fee structure that is intended to provide a more predictable cost analysis for parents and students, a stable base for the university, and an incentive for students to complete their degree work on time (four years for a 4-year degree). This is obviously a work in progress, but my first glimpse at their initial formulations left me extremely optimistic and enthusiastically supportive. And, I am very grateful for their hard work and dedication to finding the best alternatives among a variety of beneficial options.