

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON



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October 31, 1969

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Lallas

FROM: Jim Tattersall

SUBJECT: Higher Education Seminar with Rep. Robert G. Davis, October 28, 1969

These comments summarize my more vivid impressions of the session of the Higher Education Seminar attended by Rep. Robert Davis, Professor Glen Love, and myself. Since it was a 2-1/2 hour session and you will be giving your own summary to President Clark, I won't attempt to summarize everything that was discussed.

The session was a relaxed, informal exchange of ideas among the chairman of the Oregon House Task Force on Higher Education, three members of our faculty, and about a dozen graduate students enrolled in Ed 590. The guests were introduced by Mr. Pedee, a student who evidently selected the Task Force Report as his class project and whose initiative resulted in the presence of the three guests.

Representative Davis has been very responsive to invitations to appear at the University of Oregon to discuss the Task Force Report and other matters, whatever the size of the group that extended the invitation. His conduct of the hearings at the University in February was commendable, and his sincere interest in problems of higher education, and his willingness to engage in give-and-take discussions are encouraging.

He began with a straightforward summary of the Task Force Report's major conclusions. He expressed the view that people in higher education had reacted negatively to the Report and its recommendations; that this was especially regrettable since the public was very alarmed (partly unjustifiably) about certain trends in Higher Education and if Higher Education did not change its negative response an adverse public reaction would follow.

Several of us questioned if UO had indeed reacted negatively. We argued that the University was highly sensitive to the need to improve undergraduate teaching (the main thrust of the Task Force Report) and was making progress in this area. Furthermore, undergraduate teaching here was not bad to begin with, and some exciting developments had occurred well before the Task Force investigation.

Representative Davis reacted very positively to evidence we offered that the University had a responsive attitude, and to information on specific steps we are taking.

We discussed the coming visit to the campus of the Interim Committee on Education headed by Rep. Floyd Hart. It was clear from our discussion with Rep. Davis that the Interim Committee will want to follow up on the Task Force Report. It is therefore desirable that the University make sure the Committee is apprised of recent developments and of our plans in those areas which are prominent in the report; specifically, undergraduate teaching, use and compensation of graduate assistants, student conduct, preventative steps to minimize the possibility of violence, and plans for coping with it if it occurs. Of these, the most important area is improving undergraduate education.

Some of the faculty and students present pointed out to Rep. Davis that the Task Force Report concentrated on certain problems but said little or nothing about the general goals the Legislature had in mind for higher education in the State. What, for example, did they (or the legal profession) think about the quality of lawyers being turned out by the Law School? While the Report said a better job could be done in undergraduate education, what were the goals of a liberal education?

These are very valid points. I suggest we take up these kinds of questions when the Interim Committee visits. Certainly we should apprise the Committee of the work being done by the recently appointed Committee on Institutional Self-Study.

Mr. Blevens, formerly President Johnson's assistant, and a member of the seminar, brought up the topic of educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, and the University's response to this national problem. Rep. Davis expressed the view the Legislature should become more involved in this problem. This is another topic we should bring to the attention of the Interim Committee; we should take every opportunity to try to move the Legislature in the direction of providing funds for this inadequately financed area. (It is also one aspect of undergraduate education we can point to as representing an important University effort).

Another conclusion I reached from this session was that we should try to lead legislators (including the Interim Committee) away from the concept many of them seem to have that the teacher's contribution to undergraduate education is measured and fully accounted for by the number of hours he spends in the classroom. (they use the term "contact hours"). This, I suppose, would involve drawing attention to hours spent in preparation (and summers spent in planning undergraduate courses), individual consultation with undergraduates, special additional discussion sessions conducted by many faculty members, tutorial arrangements (as in Political Science, involving both faculty and upper classmen), and work being done on innovations in teaching. In the physical sciences especially faculty members spend much time training individual students in the labs; these are probably mainly graduate students, however.

Even given these qualifications, some of our faculty (perhaps especially in science departments) do have minimal contact with undergraduates. Teaching loads in a few departments seem extraordinarily light. In this area I think

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the University needs to develop and/or clarify its policies.

We pointed out to Rep. Davis that a number of faculty members were interested in proposing innovative teaching projects to the Coordinating Council, which controls the \$750,000 allocated by the Legislature. They were presently stymied because the Council had not issued its guidelines. Rep. Davis expressed concern about this delay (and about the apparent intent of the Council to require completion of projects by the opening of the next legislative session), and said he would follow up on the problem.

Another topic discussed was the question of how to increase communication between the academic community and the Legislature. Rep. Davis was very responsive to the idea of small faculty groups visiting the Legislature during the session, for informal meetings as well as appearances before committees. He suggested either the AAUP or the Faculty, or both, might want to establish committees to do that. He hoped committee feedback to the Faculty might engender more sympathy for the problems faced by the Legislature. He commended the Chancellor and his staff on the job they did, but felt broader contacts with the academic community were desirable.

Some other topics discussed with Rep. Davis were: (1) The University's Conduct Code--specifically, should it have been applied to students involved in the assault on Navy recruiters (Rep. Davis thought it should have been, immediately following the incident but appeared persuaded the University was discouraged from doing that by the local District Attorney); (2) The value of graduate education and research to the state and nation--Rep. Davis insisted the Legislature did not intend to understate the value of these activities; if it so appeared from the Task Force Report, that was a matter of emphasis; (3) Various issues from the last legislative session, e.g., the "Superboard", salary improvement formulae, enrollment limitations. On all these issues there was amicable expression of various points of view.

The major conclusions I reached from this session were:

1. It is important that UO plan rather thoroughly for the visit of the Interim Committee, with regard to topics we should bring to their attention, and people who should appear; this should be done without overly structuring the hearings or introducing tedium;
2. We should actively seek further opportunities for small group meetings with key legislators; the AAUP can help to a degree but should not be expected to carry the entire burden of such contacts. The notion of a legislative committee appointed by the UO Faculty has some attraction.