FISCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE PRESIDENT

Minutes of October 18, 2000

Members present: Ron Henry (chair), Ahmed Abdelal, John de Castro, Jerry Edwards, Fenwick Huss, Fred Jacobs, Katherine Johnston, Tom Lewis, Leslie Williams

Members absent: Sid Harris

Others present: Reid Christenberry, Bill Evans, Scott Owen, Jerry Rackliffe, Edgar Torbert

Minutes of September 15 were approved as distributed.

Student Technology Fee

Mr. Rackliffe reported fall semester technology fee revenues after refunds would be approximately $1.6M.

Dr. de Castro asked for reconsideration of technology fee proposals #1.4.2 (make DDL supported web sites ADA compliant), #1.6.1 (enhance ADA compliance for open access labs, classrooms and libraries), and #2.1.05 (A&S graduate labs), which the faculty-and-student review committee had placed in Category 3. He urged these proposals be moved to either Category 1 or 2. He pointed out that graduate students pay the technology fee as well as undergraduates.

Dr. Owen responded regarding the two ADA proposals. He stated the review committee had operated under the initial guideline from the Board of Regents that ADA compliance would be addressed by other fund sources. He added that the committee saw proposal #2.2.2a (COE/EPSE assistive technology lab replacement), which was placed in Category 1, as partially addressing the same needs as proposal #1.6.1. He stated the review committee did, and would, view ADA compliance as an important matter, and there would be funding opportunities for such proposals in subsequent years.

Dr. Henry commented that one additional consideration had been the option of centralized location of specialized ADA equipment rather than distributing across campus as in proposal #1.6.1. He added that the Board of Regents had recently revised its position to allow technology fee funding for ADA compliance.

Dr. de Castro responded that the centralized location of ADA equipment would not be consistent with the objective of mainstreaming students with disabilities. Mr. Christenberry countered that the centralized approach reflected concern about having to partition a larger number of rooms in order to accommodate sound systems for hearing-impaired students.

Dr. Abdelal inquired about the originating unit for the ADA proposals. Dr. Henry replied that proposals #1.4.2 and #1.6.1 had come from Disability Services. Dr. Abdelal remarked these
proposals were fundable in pieces so it would not necessarily be an all-or-nothing decision. Dr. Owen responded that if these two proposals were shifted to Category 2, it was likely partial funding would be recommended as for most of the other Category 2 proposals. He noted the review committee would meet again in the spring semester to prioritize the Category 2 proposals and recommend funding levels in view of actual technology fee revenues.

Dr. de Castro suggested consideration of full funding for proposal #1.4.2 and one-third funding for proposal #1.6.1. Dr. Owen commented on proposal #1.4.2 that it was currently unclear what ADA compliance means regarding web sites. He cautioned against hurriedly funding this proposal given this uncertainty. Mr. Christenberry added that proposal #1.4.2 addressed ADA compliance for web sites of one department only.

Dr. Huss asked if the split between Category 1 and Category 2 proposals reflected awareness of the amount of revenues available in fall semester. Dr. Henry replied the split was happenstance so far as its rough approximation to the amount of funds available between the two semesters.

Dr. Jacobs expressed concern about the funding criterion of serving the greatest number of students, in particular as it could disadvantage the smaller colleges such as Law. Dr. Owen replied the number of students served was not the only, or overriding, criterion, and that Law had done well in the process with its recommended funding for labs equal to approximately two-thirds of the funding for Business and one-quarter the funding for Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Huss inquired about consideration by the review committee of the Senate resolution on student access to computing as related to new open labs. Dr. Owen replied the committee had not focused at length on the resolution given the difficulty of weighting on-campus access versus off-campus access. He added that even if students have access at home, many of them will seek on-campus access as well. He noted the proposal for an open lab at the GSU Village had not been recommended because of the availability of network connections in the dormitory rooms. He further commented that lack of space was also a determining factor in not funding new open labs.

Dr. Abdelal observed the issue of funding for open labs was not limited to new open labs, but also replacement equipment for existing open labs and the new Digital Aquarium. He stated the Deans Group had unanimously urged funding be directed to enhance student ability to use technology in the disciplines and that the funding balance between open labs and specialized labs should reflect this emphasis. He held that the recommendations from the review committee did not show this balance.

Dr. Huss reacted that the students on the review committee had initially supported funding for open labs only, but had been led to support a more balanced distribution of the funds. He added that although funding of replacement equipment for open labs was in Category 1, the combination of Category 1 and Category 2 was more balanced between open labs and specialized labs. Dr. Henry reiterated that both Category 1 and Category 2 would be funded in all likelihood in the next twelve months. Dr. Abdelal agreed if both categories were funded the balance would be more acceptable.

Dr. de Castro called attention to one of the specialized lab proposals which was in Category 3, but seemed to meet all the criteria mentioned by Dr. Owen as important to the review committee. Dr. Owen responded that the proposals were almost all meritorious, and that it was a matter of other
proposals meeting the criteria at a higher level, and as usual for such funding programs, judgment calls being made by the committee. He added it was likely this proposal would be funded in a subsequent year, if resubmitted.

Mr. Christenberry reminded that FACP in past years had adopted a strategy of not budgeting funds for upgrades of open labs, but instead relying on contingency funding from year to year. He pointed out this situation had been a major reason for asking the Board of Regents to initiate the technology fee.

Dr. de Castro questioned the choice of a three-year cycle for replacement of equipment in open labs. He suggested a four-year cycle might work as well and thereby free up funds for other technology fee proposals. He added that some items might need replacing every two years while others could wait four years or longer. Dr. Owen responded that having only one kind of workstation was essential for a PC classroom, but not for an open lab.

Dr. Owen noted concern of the review committee about on-going costs and how to handle these in the proposal-review process. He pointed to the absence of recommendations to hire personnel on technology fee funds at the department level. In this regard, he stated ISAT would also have to submit requests annually for replacement of open lab equipment rather than have a guaranteed three or four-year cycle of funding.

Dr. Abdelal stated evidence was needed to support the one-third, open lab equipment replacement proposal. He also suggested a lower level of funding for open lab replacements would free funds for higher technology proposals, such as the discipline-specific labs.

Mr. Christenberry reacted that the one-third replacement cycle was consistent with national norms. He questioned the fairness of asking students to complete assignments on a four-year old computer or on a computer which would not handle the most sophisticated assignment from an instructor. He observed newer software does not function as well on older computers, and that slower computer performance would worsen waits in the crowded open labs. He also pointed to higher maintenance costs for older computers.

Dr. Abdelal injected his point was that these assumptions need to be scrutinized more closely. Dr. Owen acknowledged truth in "what Intel giveth, Microsoft taketh" with respect to demands of new software on processors. He also acknowledged that computers in the open labs are beat up by heavy around-the-clock use. Dr. Jacobs commented that some faculty had computers more than four years old. Dr. Henry replied this should not be the case given the new computers made available to all departments for Y2K compliance.

Dr. de Castro recalled a news report that chip prices would be falling in November. He commented this would allow funds allocated for open labs to be stretched further with savings for application to other proposals.

Dr. Abdelal reiterated concern that the one-third replacement funding this fiscal year would be construed as a commitment to a three-year replacement cycle. Mr. Edwards responded that this was not automatic and that annual proposals would be required of ISAT for open lab equipment replacements. Dr. Abdelal acknowledged this was how Mr. Edwards and others had voted this
Mr. Christenberry stated open lab replacements would be based on performance parameters keyed to type of processor, and that already $40K in savings had been identified because of Y2K-related upgrades. Dr. Owen agreed that performance factors should be the key issue in determining whether replacements came every two or three or four years. He noted open labs were heavily used for word processing and Internet activities which did not require top-of-the-line processors.

Dr. de Castro suggested that the recommendation of the review committee to fund one-third, open lab equipment replacements be modified to three-quarters of the recommended amounts to effect a four-year cycle. Dr. Owen replied that the review committee had essentially done this by partially funding the requests from ISAT. Dr. de Castro again noted the potential savings due to cheaper chips. Dr. Owen identified the proposals which would be so modified in funding as proposal #1.1.1 (UETS replacement of one third of open lab computers), proposal #1.2.01 (Pullen replacement of one third of library computers), proposal #2.2.1 (COE/ITC three-year upgrade), and proposal #2.6.1 (Law Library computer replacements).

Mr. Christenberry offered to resubmit the proposal for open labs with performance information for each computer identified for replacement.

Dr. Huss suggested consideration of an open lab for word processing use only, which could be equipped less expensively.

Dr. Jacobs asked it be made clear that whatever action was taken for the current fiscal year in replacing open lab equipment did not set precedent for future years.

Dr. Henry stated a preference for re-examining funding of the open lab proposal on the basis of the minimum-powered computer necessary rather than a "hard" three-quarters figure for funding. Mr. Edwards commented this was in the spirit of the proposal as supported by students and would achieve the level of functionality which was the key issue with students. He added that the students did not view the proposal as presented to have any fluff. Dr. Abdelal cautioned that all proposals have some fluff.

Dr. de Castro offered a modification to his original suggestion that the funding be approximately three-quarters of that recommended by the review committee with the amount to be determined on the basis of further analysis of the level of processor needed. Mr. Christenberry indicated a spreadsheet was already available to provide the information requested.

Dr. de Castro again requested consideration of proposal #2.1.05 for graduate labs. He characterized this proposal as providing "bang for bucks", and voiced concern graduate students had been shortchanged in the funding process. Dr. Owen replied that the department labs recommended for funding served both undergraduate and graduate students, as did the open labs. He noted the graduate lab as presented did not call for any specialized software. Dr. Abdelal pointed out the graduate lab would employ specialized software for humanities and social sciences, but the departments had not included these in the proposal because of the absence of
stated criteria at the start of the process.

Dr. de Castro spoke for the single graduate lab as a more efficient approach than separate department labs. Dr. Abdelal echoed this point and indicated his preference for support of the central lab request over the department lab requests, including the Sociology lab which was recommended for funding. Dr. Owen commented that Law had rank ordered all of its proposals which was helpful to the committee, and this kind of information would have been helpful from Arts and Sciences and the other colleges. Dr. Abdelal commented on the difficulty of ranking proposals for Arts and Sciences given the breadth of departments. Mr. Edwards voiced support for moving proposal #2.1.05 to Category 2. Dr. Owen repeated that all Category 2 proposals would be revisited by the review committee in spring semester.

Dr. Crimmins suggested the departments submitting proposals related to or offset by proposal #2.1.05 should be allowed to revise their proposals accordingly. Dr. Huss voiced concern that this would be favored treatment for a few departments, so that all should be allowed to resubmit. Dr. Henry urged that the hard work of the review committee be honored, and that the process for the current fiscal year not be effectively restarted. Dr. Owen pointed out that proposals for next fiscal year would be solicited in spring semester, with the benefit of statements of funding criteria and an improved process of review. Dr. Henry stated FACP would be the appropriate body to make any adjustments in funding for the current fiscal year.

Ms. Johnston expressed concern about the logistics of implementing proposal #1.1.4 (free printing for students). She noted for example the question of unused printing allowances. She asked about any currently budgeted funds for printing which would be freed up by the technology fee, which would be prohibited by Board of Regents guidelines. Dr. Owen responded that this printing was not budgeted. Mr. Christenberry added that the costs had been covered heretofore by vacancy-salary savings.

Dr. Henry stated that the PantherCard approach for charging printing had been developed in response to increasing use of printing by non-students visiting the libraries. Dr. Owen noted extremely enthusiastic student support for proposal #1.1.4 because of the benefit for such a large number of students. Mr. Christenberry reported Ms. Gard was directly involved in the technical and logistical aspects of the proposal and would be asked to contact Finance and Administration regarding implementation issues.

Dr. de Castro stated discomfort with proposal #1.1.4 from the standpoint of its consumability as opposed to support for continuing infrastructure. He added that free printing could be viewed as a rebate on the technology fee, which could be improper. Mr. Edwards took exception to the consumability issue, speaking of the lasting value to students of printed material taken from the library and computer labs. He argued that taking information home was a part of access to technology.

Dr. Abdelal called attention to proposal #1.1.3 (UETS expand main lab capacity, security and work environment) in Category 1, which included funds for renovations. He noted the Board of Regents guidelines discouraged use of technology fees for renovations, and expressed concern some departments had not submitted proposals because of this guideline. Dr. Owen conceded the review committee had some reservations about the renovation component of the proposal, but had
proceeded with funding because this proposal offered the only opportunity to increase open lab capacity. Mr. Christenberry stated the renovations amounted to $100K of the total package of $197K, and that the Board of Regents intended to limit use of technology fees to convert space to labs as opposed to minor renovation of existing labs.

Dr. Huss asked if there was any data available on students using on-campus versus off-campus access. Mr. Christenberry responded that ISAT had information about lab use and log-ons from off-campus, but this would not be fully descriptive. Dr. Owen repeated that students tend to use both on-campus and off-campus access, rather than one or the other. Dr. Huss urged study of access patterns before the next round of funding.

Dr. Abdelal suggested moving proposal #1.1.3 to Category 2. Dr. de Castro suggested moving proposal #1.1.3 to Category 3. Dr. Owen pointed out timing issues which had already effectively placed this proposal in Category 2.

Mr. Edwards spoke in favor of proposal #1.1.3, given increased student access was an objective of the technology fee. He offered the opinion that the number of students taking advantage of on-campus access was irrelevant, but that every student should have access because every student pays the technology fee. Dr. Huss replied that the issue was the nature of the access. Dr. Abdelal added that another issue was whether the same dollars could be more effectively used for technology rather than renovations.

Dr. de Castro questioned proposals #1.2.09 (Pullen laptops and cart for wireless network) and #1.3.4 (wireless for plaza, open areas of library and student center). Dr. Owen responded that these were fairly modest proposals to experiment with wireless connectivity for students bringing their own laptops to campus. He pointed out this would potentially relieve some demand on the open labs. Dr. Henry noted national interest in this approach to providing access.

Dr. Henry summarized (for action) the recommendations of FACP from the above discussion as follows:

1) move the ADA proposals #1.4.2 and #1.6.1 from Category 3 to Category 2;
2) move the graduate lab proposal #2.1.05 from Category 3 to Category 2;
3) move the open lab expansion proposal #1.1.3 from Category 1 to Category 2;
4) adjust the funding of open lab equipment replacement proposals #1.1.1, #1.2.01, #2.2.1 and #2.6.1 in keeping with analysis of minimum performance parameters (processor types) and any drop in computer pricing; and
5) hold funding of the free printing proposal #1.1.4 pending determination of logistical issues.

This summary was accepted by FACP for recommendation to Dr. Patton.

**Fall Semester Revenues**

Mr. Rackliffe reported informally the revenue shortfall through fall semester was approximately $700K.