

COMMENTS FROM OUTGOING FACULTY ADVISOR
FEBRUARY 2, 2007

1. Thank you for the opportunity to share a few brief remarks.
2. As a university we have taken a number of forward strides in recent years.
3. One of the most important strides forward has been to initiate what I have every reason to believe will be a successful presidential search.
4. The Board deserves credit on a number of points regarding the search.
 - a. First I believe you deserve credit for hiring Korn-Ferry and following the advice of John Kuhnle in commissioning the Fisher Report.
 - i. Like many faculty, and probably many in this room, I was a skeptic.
 - ii. But subsequent developments have led me to reconsider this position.
 - iii. First, the Board addressed in an open manner the broad concerns addressed in the Fisher Report but also showed good judgment in rejecting those recommendations that did not fit our needs.
 - iv. The other development that convinced me that commissioning the Fisher Report was a smart move was that many presidential candidates interviewed by the Search Committee commented favorably on our ability to take an open and honest look at ourselves.
 - v. Auburn's history is well known, not only to those of us in this room but also by the higher education community

generally, and virtually all of the candidates interested in coming to Auburn.

- vi. The Fisher Report and the Board's handling of this Report represent a turning of the page, and we would not have as strong a pool of candidates were this not so.
- b. The second point where credit is deserved is the brilliant stroke of naming Charles McCrary chair of the Search Committee.
- i. I've gained an enormous amount of respect for Charles through this process.
 - ii. Under his leadership, the committee as a whole has worked together for the good of the university.
 - iii. And I have every reason to believe that this will continue as we head down the home stretch.
 - iv. A presidential search is a defining moment in a university's history, not only because we are hiring someone to provide leadership but because the person we choose should have a vision that matches our own and is therefore prepared to instill a sense of common purpose.
 - v. One reason Charles has been an excellent chair is that he understands that process is the key to a successful search – that a successful search is not only selecting the right individual, but doing so in a manner that builds support for the successful candidate, thereby laying the foundation for a successful presidency.
5. I also appreciate the Board at your June meeting adopting unanimously both
- a. the 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, and
 - b. the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities that was jointly formulated by the AAUP, the

American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

6. Finally, I want to compliment the Board on your recent actions to attract top quality students by expanding merit-based scholarships.
7. This past year has been full of momentous decisions that will shape the future of Auburn University, mostly for the good. I would like to share with you in closing one concern.
 - a. I am concerned over what I would characterize as an orgy of construction and the consequent burden of debt and future costs that we are accumulating as a result of this growth.
 - b. I understand that historically low interest rates and federal largess have fueled this orgy.
 - c. I recognize that the new facilities are impressive, but bricks alone will not attract the quality faculty and students that make a great university.
 - d. As we learned yesterday, we've spent over \$400 million on construction in recent years with other major construction efforts in the works.
 - e. Dr Large told us that our bonded indebtedness will reach \$333 million in 2007. The 2005 data in the financial report presented yesterday indicated that over 70% of this debt backed by General Fee revenues. The remainder were auxiliary funds (athletics and housing).
 - f. During each of the next 5 years, principle and interest payments will total over \$24 million. Our utility bills are projected to increase \$3 million this year compared to last in large part due to new facilities.
 - g. There is only so much debt we can support, only so many buildings we can heat, cool, and maintain.

- h. When people ask ‘Why is the cost of a college education increasing more quickly than the rate of inflation?’ there are a number of answers,
 - i. including decreased state and federal support for higher education.
 - ii. We should realize, as well, that the interest on debt, energy, and maintenance also are major factors.
 - iii. And the choices we make regarding types of facilities are not without consequences. Yesterday we took a major step towards construction of luxurious new dorms where per bed costs may be \$1000 higher than those in our current dorms.
- i. We have made and are in the process of making additional commitments that will limit the options of future Board members, administrators, students and faculty.
- j. There has been a lot of talk about accountability over the past year, and the people asking why the cost of a college education is increasing more quickly than the rate of inflation deserve an answer.
- k. The debt load incurred in recent years will have to be included in any fair accounting to address this question.