

Sent: Sunday, March 13, 2011 10:07 PM
To: _MJC Everyone at MJC
Subject: Board meeting postmortem

Colleagues:

There have been too many emails flying around after the Board meeting that just haven't put a proper finger on what actually happened Wednesday night. In three words:

WE blew it...

The board was expected to decide on a course of a fiscal reduction policy, and we presented them with a desired educational priorities policy. In retrospect, literally none of us in over four hours actually provided what they needed to see and hear. They needed to hear about how to save \$8 million, and we flooded them with program priority requests/demands. Not one single speaker came equipped with a believable alternative to the President's plan *complete with the means of funding attached*.

What was poured into the two microphones sounded something like this:

"You need to save program X, because it is REALLY important".

"...(OK, how much will that cost and where is the money coming from?)..."

"Did I mention it's REALLY IMPORTANT?"

"Thank you, your time is up..."

"NONONONONONO, REEEEEEEALLY IMPORTANT"

"Thank you..."

"GRRRRRRRR!"

"Thank you..."

"GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!!!! GRRR! (YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)"

Two of the Trustees said that they hadn't heard a single viable alternative all night, and they were right. I was there, and those statements included my own feeble attempt. We all talked eloquently about educational and programmatic priorities, but nobody mentioned how the bill was to be paid. We did the reasoning half of the job, but failed to do the important financial other half.

Remember writing essays and reports in University? No matter how wonderful the report, no footnotes, no sources = no grade. It was the same Wednesday night: No matter how wonderful the defense of a program, no economic plan, no funding source = no viable alternative.

As an example, look at part of the alternative list presented by the Academic Senate. One of the suggestions was to

close the new Measure E buildings after their ribbon-cutting ceremonies, saving a rumored \$1.5 million, or roughly the same amount as the faculty cuts combined. Well, it sounds good, but nobody bothered to get the actual numbers nailed down. To do that, one would need to:

Commission an energy study of each new building considering the building size, heat transfer characteristics, occupant loading, expected ambient temperatures, utility costs, central plant efficiencies etc. This would have to be a Kitchell-type operation with a professional engineer's signature for credibility and funding from non-District sources;

Check with Facilities to calculate the number of personnel needed to maintain the buildings, supplies, and total maintenance costs:

Security would have to estimate manpower costs to effectively patrol the new buildings;

Create a study with the Instruction office to see which buildings *must* be occupied for ADA or other reasons, subtracting those from the above total savings;

Type the whole thing up in a report (yes, with sources and footnotes), and run the entire package through Theresa Scott to have her verify the numbers and reconcile any errors;

A discussion would have to be held to determine the wisdom of such a move, since new buildings have a "warranty" period of usually one year, and immediate occupation would aid in discovering design and construction flaws;

If the total savings turns out to be less than expected, come up with a list of the proposed programs that would be saved and another list with those that would *still* be cut. Provide your own criteria and justifications. Have your own public hearing with crying and jeering. Defend *your* list from those still on the way out.

Finally, give the board at least a week to look the proposals over.....

Was any of this done? No. Were we expecting somebody else to do this for us? The Senate passed this resolution *the night before the Board meeting*. What were the chances that this or any other last-minute "alternative" would be seriously considered? None. It took the Senate two full meetings just to get the wording right. What were the chances of the Board hearing the plan, sorting it out, verifying it, and adopting it in one session? We were all a day late and a dollar short. OK, a week late and \$1.5 million short.

In the past, we have chided certain Board members for "micromanaging" our colleges; now it seems we expect them to. They are not going to do our due diligence for us, crunch the numbers, check facts, or do anything more than decide what is put before them. In reality, the Board members are supposed to act like judges, deciding major policies, and letting the colleges themselves work out the details. In a courtroom, if your attorney fails to bring in enough evidence to make your case, you don't blame the judge. So, **don't blame the Board**.

Now we hear that the ASMJC wants to spank the Board members with a vote of "no confidence". Sorry, but the only real result from that vote will be that nobody will have "confidence" in the ASMJC leadership. Their proposals were just as incomplete as the rest of ours. I guess it's a lot more exciting to march around the campus with bullhorns and yell "Brown Act!" at public meetings than to do your homework.....

Then there are the folks that are complaining that the Board members had pre-written their responses to the vote. This means that they "had their minds made up before the meeting". Well, of course they did! They were only given one real and believable plan of action, and heard no others Wednesday night. I would have done the same. I would have had a paper with one side saying "my reasoning for my 'yes' vote" and "my reasoning for my 'no' vote" on the back side to cover both scenarios. I would also have had the YCCD counsel look both over. With such a highly-charged crowd and so much at stake, any misinterpretation of my words could start a riot or at least a lawsuit. Several times Wednesday night I almost expected the crowd to break out with "Crucify them! Crucify them! Give us Barabbas!!!". (If you don't know what that means, I'm inviting you to my church on Easter and you can hear the whole story.....). Wednesday night was no occasion to practice one's extemporaneous speaking skills.

As for the Board not listening to Sam's amendment; they couldn't. As the Board members gave their wrap-up speeches, the last member "called for the question" which effectively ends debate and moves directly to the final vote. This motion is non-debatable and doesn't allow for any other amendments or

discussion. Sam actually interrupted the process too late. If he had enlisted the aid of one of the Board members as a champion of the amendment, things might have turned out differently.

So, where do we go from here? If you REALLY want to have the Board be serious about changes to the now-adopted policy, realize that it will be very difficult but not impossible. DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Concentrate on the financial aspects of your proposal. Secure the funding. Sign the documents and pay the fees. Make sure it is believable, fair, understandable, and legal. Create a new Board resolution and enlist some Board champions. Stop the complaints and roll up your sleeves. Unless you do, nothing will change.

Thanks for your patience, and best of results!

Respectfully,