

Palms discusses budget crisis, NCAA report

By JACK DUNN
News Editor

What I wanted to talk about first was the board of trustees meeting at Litchfield (Jan. 8-9). You were present for that meeting?

Yes, I was.

From reading Bill Robinson's interview (The State, Jan. 10) of the board members, the board members discussed an expanded role for the president.

Well, not really an expanded role. They were just reaffirming my authority as well as my responsibilities.

Concerning distribution of funds to branch campuses?

That's the mission of the university as a system. It's my responsibility to administer the policies that are formulated by the board and to operate the institution and manage it. I'll do this in a collegial way with the faculty and with the administrators, but, again, I'm responsible. And since I'm responsible, I have authority. They were just reaffirming that I had those and that I need to work to try and build a meaningful system concept. And that's what I already do. I accepted that.

Was tuition discussed at the meeting?

Yes, tuition was discussed...trends in tuition were discussed. I think it's fair to say what Provost Moeser said at the faculty meeting (Jan. 15) that tuition increases are not to be viewed as a continuous solution to our financial woes. We have to look at a more effective and efficient way of doing things. We have shared some of our financial burdens with students because we have not taken raises. We have not filled a number of positions. We have a hundred positions. I'm sure there are more than that. And we double up on some of our responsibilities, and we shared some of the burden with the students. In the absence of revenue enhancements, our costs continue to go up. Nobody has put a moratorium on our costs, and as the infrastructure costs increase for running our academic programs — in other words, our library expenses — our books cost more; our journals cost more. The technologies we need to teach in modern ways cost more. Inflation is there, so we have increased costs.

And as far as health insurance?

Yeah, health insurance, workmen's compensation, and all that kind of thing. So unless we find, you know, improve our

productivity just like industry — that's hard to do in higher education — the public does not want a tax increase. Industry does not want to reduce their margins and their reasonable profits, so revenue enhancements by tax increases is not realistic. So we have no choice but to look and see if we can do things more effectively. So essentially what we are doing is having a user's fee for our students, and the gamble is that it's an important enough activity that people will pay for, and so far that's been the case, both in private and public higher education.

Did the board of trustees address revenue enhancements in the form of other fees besides tuition?

No, we just talked about fees and tuition together. There are some professional schools that are still tremendous bargains — law school, medicine — where you get a payback pretty rapidly after you graduate. But there are a lot of other majors where that's not to be expected. In terms of fees, we're talking about the total costs of our education — tuition, books, room and board, and anything else that comes up.

As far as general costs, has the board of trustees pretty much said that they can't increase student fees any further without affecting enrollment?

Well, they just reiterated, and we all feel this, that in this relatively poor state that we can't continue to have one of the highest costs for higher education. Eventually, it will affect our enrollment. It hasn't thus far, but it puts tremendous demands on our financial aid programs, and you can see the applications go up. People who aren't eligible in the past are now eligible because the costs are higher — people who are under-employed or are shifting in industry and don't have the income or have been laid off. That's something to watch. We have over \$50 million coming to the university now in financial aid and all of our programs. Fifty million dollars! Students are graduating with debts, and that's not healthy for the country. So all of that has to be watched.

There was a committee meeting to look into a new business dean to replace James Kane. Has there been any progress?

There's a search committee that's ongoing. I think they are making progress. I think they have it down to about 15 names, and we are still hopeful to have a dean

announced before the end of the semester.

That was along with last semester with the three deans resigning or being replaced.

He (Kane) is resigning his deanship, but he will be a faculty member in the marketing department.

Along with the meeting of Carol McGinnis Kay and her resignation announcement, there was talk about a "super college" between the arts and sciences.

I put the committee together to look at the possibility of merging the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Math and Sciences. That committee engaged in analysis of some of the best schools in the country — how they were organized. We looked at our structure and the history of our two colleges. We looked at the linkages of the various departments of the colleges and sensed the sentiment of the faculty of those colleges. There wasn't really a commitment to do that. I listened to what they had to say at the last meeting, and that was their recommendation, and I concurred with it. So matters dropped.

So it doesn't look like anything will happen.

We'll go on and look for a dean for Humanities and Social Sciences. It's not going to happen.

Shifting the subject to the NCAA report. There was a meeting Wednesday to work on it?

There was a meeting Wednesday; there's a meeting today. We're compiling the complete report this afternoon as we speak. We're working on it. Our goal is to hand deliver it to the Commissioner of the SEC on Monday. I hope that Monday afternoon we can have a press release.

That would mention the third violation and any action?

It will announce all violations and all of our sanctions.

Does it recommend internal sanctions, and do you expect any external action by the SEC or NCAA?

The SEC will take that document, and they will comment on it and forward it on to the NCAA. The NCAA can either concur with us and issue no additional sanctions, or they can issue additional sanctions.

Do you expect any sanctions from the NCAA?

I don't expect any sanctions from the

NCAA.

In the compilation of that report, David Didion, he's the compliance officer for the NCAA?

Yes.

Does the NCAA hire him?

No.

It's a USC position?

We hire him. He reports directly to me. He's responsible for showing that we are in compliance with all NCAA rules. He assisted in the investigation of the alleged violations and has conducted all of the interviews, etc. Not all of them. I was involved in some of them.

Have their been any investigations into a new basketball coach?

I don't see why we should do that when we still got one.

You plan to stay with Steve Newton, then?

We currently have no plans to make any changes. I don't want to pre-empt the report.

I guess we'll turn back to the Future Committee meetings today (Jan. 15). I wonder if you could explain the 12 percent-6 percent plan.

This is an exercise to facilitate our strategic planning of consumer level funding to the university. And we assume, one, we have costs that are increasing. With no additional funding, these costs have to be held down. If you consider that we are creating new ideas and ambitions for some new programs because the university creates and innovates as I have said. We're trying to see how we can re-allocate funds. This is a process that has been tried in some other places. You tell somebody you're going to cut 12 percent, "What would you cut?" And now he gives you that 6 percent back, "What would you fund?" It creates a very serious self-analysis about what you've done. That doesn't mean you're going to be cut necessarily. You may come back and say, "Hey listen, there is no possible way we are teaching more than anybody else. We don't have any money now. We can't cut anything." The committee could say, "Well, we disagree with you because you're just not producing quality." At least you go through that exercise. That's what the purpose of this committee is — assessment of current programming, re-allocation of funds to the colleges supplemented in some formal sense, which has real quality programs,



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which are obsolete, which ones does the state need more than others and try to come to grips with some priorities. But our strategic plan borrows from the future, and to recommit ourselves to a central mission, which in light of the world we now live, is a different world than it has been in the time that we were growing up. We totally quit being creative. We're now in, kind of, a steady state.

As far as your discussion of strategic planning, we started in a period of decline. So you are evidently seeing a period of growth after two to three years?

I am tremendously optimistic about what this university can contribute to the welfare of this state. I am confident we're going to get new resources. It's not going to be tax money revenue, but we will continue to get gifts from universities and private institutions. We will continue to improve our research grantsmanship. In the long run, I think we'll do all right if we continue to manage ourselves well and don't try to do everything. But if we say, "We're a flagship institution, we're the most elitist — in the good sense of the word elitist — quality academic institution, and these are the things we're going to do well." Somebody else can do the rest of it. Otherwise it isn't going to get done.

And lastly, what will USC being doing as far as the observance of Martin Luther King Day?

Well, we've got an awful lot going on in the next two weeks. We've got the Dr. Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP coming and a paper program coming. So we're not observing this particular date, but we are observing the activities.



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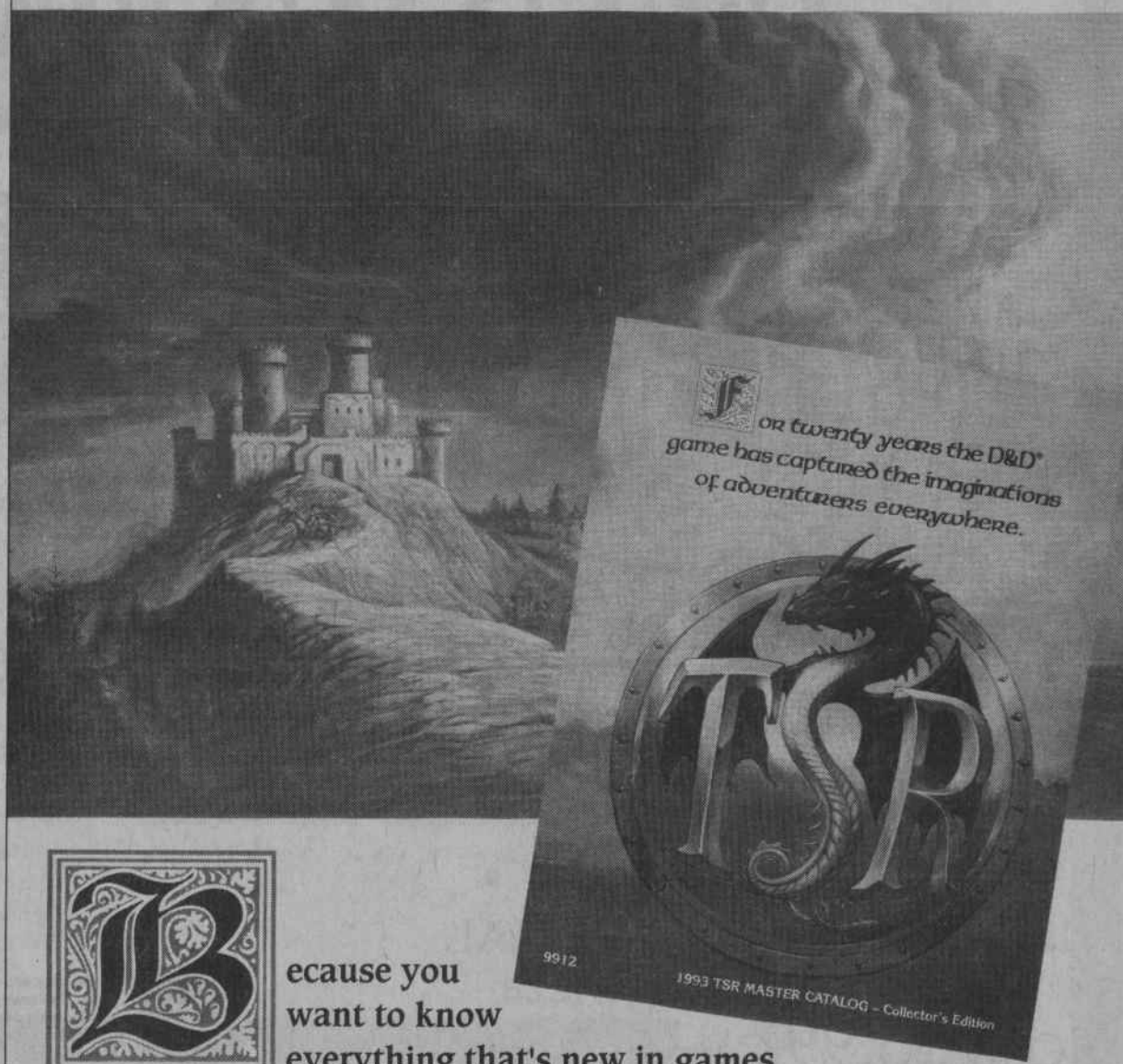
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