

**Advisory Council of Faculty
Representative Report to Faculty Senate
March 3, 2017**

Many ACF representatives from around the state attended the HEPC session held February 3, the same day as our monthly meeting. Dr. Bruce Berry, commission chair who is completing his last term in that position, emphasized the many functions and accomplishments of HEPC, especially in the areas of degree completion and increasing access and college attendance for West Virginians.

Vice Chair Michael J. Farrell clarified some comments he made at the last HEPC meeting: he wants institutions to do a better job of making the case that our degrees are a good investment, if possible with data about earning potential versus cost.

Discussion of the legislative session included the Governor's desire to increase revenue and support education and, on the other hand, threats to higher education and HEPC, primarily because of budget issues.

Other matters included classified staff concerns about PEIA increases and lack of a plan for possible furloughs; problems with proprietary business schools' accreditation; and approval of new dental hygiene programs at West Liberty.

Many ACF representatives also attended a session, sponsored by the Associated Press, for reporters to hear and question the presidents of MU and UC and the provost of WVU about priorities for higher education in the state. The WVU and MU representatives emphasized their desire for more flexibility in personnel and salary matters. (A bill granting this to all institutions has passed the House. It would end many labor protections that are now in place, on the one hand, and allow institutions to have more direct control over staffing decisions, on the other.)

At the ACF meeting, Chancellor Hill emphasized that this session is critical, primarily in relation to the budget. HEPC staff will be working to educate legislators, especially new members, on how any further cuts will result in closed programs and lay-offs. A meeting with Governor Justice in Fairmont convinced him of higher education's economic impact. A bill to abolish HEPC and turn functions over to the department of education and the institutional boards of governors has been proposed. Hill and others emphasized that most of the Commission's functions are dictated by code and require/benefit from coordination. In addition, HEPC assists with transparency about spending and effectiveness. Legislative leaders (at the time of the ACF meeting) indicated no support for new taxes, but some revenues might be generated by 'closing loopholes.' Without a budget, WV has no spending authority, so NO checks may be issued after June 30, unless/until a budget is passed. ACF will be at Higher Education Day on March 15 and has a scheduled meeting with the Governor. One other legislative matter of concern is a bill that would prevent campuses (and private property owners) from banning guns.

On-going issues for ACF include development of an ombudsperson system to assist institutions in resolving grievances and monitoring of PEIA changes, but there was not much information on possible changes at the time of the meeting.