

Legislative Agenda Committee Final Report

April 17th, 2001

Margaret Garner, Faculty Senate Liaison

The Committee has had a busy year and witnessed the disappointment of proration and the resurgence of an unhealthy environment in the education community, the pitting of K-12 education against higher education. This is unprecedented in this country and is particularly sad for a state that needs to build strength in all segments of education. It is regrettable that the AEA has chosen to lead a negative and misleading campaign of TV and newspaper ads against higher education.

The Committee has promoted and supported the Higher Education Day Rally March 6th in Montgomery where approximately 1500 cards and letters were delivered to members of the legislature and the Governor, asking for fair and equal treatment between K-12 and higher education as has been their practice in the past. We began a series of Legislative Breakfasts which featured updates from Chancellor Meredith, Legal Counsel Hattie Kaufman, President Sorensen and most recently two members of our local delegation. We called for strong leadership and some key leaders stepped up to the challenge in both the House and the Senate, namely Representatives Tim Parker, Mike Hubbard, John Rogers, Lt. Governor Steve Windom, Senators Jabo Waggoner, Tom Butler, Phil Poole and Charles Steele. It was the amendment that Senator Steele placed on Senate Bill 24 that insured equal treatment for k-12 and higher education in the Special Session of the Legislature. Our faculty and staff have continued to call and write and we have been most appreciative of the efforts of our campus and system administrators throughout this crisis. At the present time, we have a budget recommendation for 2001-2002 which leaves the House for the Senate with recommendations of a 70 – 30 split for K-12 and higher education. While we await the final action of the 2000-2001 budget, we are encouraged by the recent Supreme Court decision to stay the ruling of Judge McCooey, opening the door for full consideration by the court of our position. This also opens the door for the Governor to stand firm on what he has said publicly, that he wants to treat all of education fairly. I urge you to refer to the Legislative Updates which can be found on the UA website under Government Relations for more complete background information on these issues. I strongly urge you to continue your calls to the Governor, Lt. Governor and the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee members with our message, treat all of education equitably and fairly.

We were gratified that the Faculty Senate chose to support the resolution regarding the UA System PAC. Times have changed radically and we have been pushed and pulled into the need for a PAC to represent our interests in state funding for education. We ask all of you to join both the Higher Education Partnership and the UA System PAC. Again, this form can be obtained from Scott Bridges or me or directly from the Government Relations page. We are hopeful that the Faculty Senate will pass unanimously today the resolution calling for reform of our state Constitution.