

Testimony

Of

Dr. Connie M. Webster, RN, CNE

**Professor of Nursing and Chairperson for the Faculty
Senate**

University of the District of Columbia

Before

**The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of
Trustees**

**Regarding Discontinuation of Undergraduate
Education Degree program**

Chairperson: Reverend Dr. Kendrick Curry

January 15, 2013

Good afternoon Trustee Curry and members of the Academic Affairs Committee, “Thank You” for this opportunity to appear before you today , and I come before you as the Chair of the University’s Faculty Senate. The purpose of my testimony is to address the matter at hand, and the lack of inclusion or respect for the Faculty Senate in this matter, even though the body (as identified in the Charter penned by the Board of Trustees) is a part of the shared governance structure of the University and “shall be responsible for considering and deliberating about university standards, programs, and for making recommendations to the Provost and the President.” Further, on pg.18, paragraph 2, under The University Senate of the 2005 Self Study report to Middle States, Standard four (4) :Leadership and Governance states: ***Pursuant to UDC Resolution 92-20, the University President was directed to “provide for the establishment of appropriate interim transitional advisory committees consisting of faculty, administrators, students, support staff, and other members of the university community to fulfill academic legislative functions and to provide analysis, guidance, support, and advice on academic reorganization curriculum reform, enhancement of services.....”***, and the Faculty Senate is on record saying it is not happening in most instances and it definitely has not happened with the proposed discontinuation of undergraduate education programs. In fact, the process of involving the Faculty Senate in the matter before you was an appearance before the Senate by the past Provost ,who announced program mergers and changes with an asterisk identifying the status of programs in the Department of Education, and the legend for the asterisk stated ”Pending administrative review.....may be discontinued, or discontinued as majors”. This process has not been transparent nor has it occurred within the parameters of shared governance. I would

also add that the faculty in the education department found out from students (attempting admission to their programs) that the Provost had ordered the Admissions Unit to stop admitting to their programs. This is not shared governance.

This matter has existed and gone through two Senates (Interim Academic and Faculty Senates), two Provosts, and many attempts by the current Senate to have shared dialogue about the issue. In fact, at two sessions of the Faculty Senate we voted unanimously that the Programs not be closed, and these proceedings were forwarded to the current Provost with request for him to come before the body.

So now Trustee Curry, we present our case to you and your committee. We have been consistently informed that “we have no authority in these decisions” and we accept the authority piece...but we should certainly have a voice and the right to pose questions. So as you and your committee prepare to deliberate on this important issue, these are the questions we raise:

1. Wouldn't it benefit the University best, to utilize a utilitarian approach in this decision making with a focus on the greatest good for the greatest number, this would certainly be in concert with our mission statement and the student population that we serve.
2. At a time when our University is preparing for reaffirmation of Middle States accreditation, is it in our best interest to close a nationally accredited education program for one without minimal certification. Especially considering:
 - A masters degree is not required to teach in the District of Columbia
 - These programs, thru grantsmanship have been revenue generating

- One of the education programs, for the first time, is offering an on-line course and the course is at full capacity. We could do more with this!
3. We would like to know if the university has been in consultation with the Chancellor (Dr. Kya Henderson) regarding our plans and her perceptions of education programs required for effective teachers.
 4. Research has been offered as the basis for the proposed new program, but the faculty has been able to produce research that counters the argument that undergraduate education is needed in a discipline, followed by graduate study in education which speaks to the need for more dialogue.

In closing, The Faculty Senate offers these recommendations to you and your committees as you deliberate this issue;

1. First, and foremost, do not discontinue a Nationally Accredited program, but instead find a way to enhance it and make it a part of the transition process proposed for education.
2. Engage the Chancellor in dialogue for an expert's opinion an in-put about the needs of the District's teachers, to ensure best practice and competent performance.
3. Involve the Faculty Senate in future dialogue about the issue (there are representatives from the department in the Senate) and/or adopt the current recommendation from the Senate to continue the program.
4. Through your decision making, provide a more stable university environment for the self assessment and preparation of the Middle States Self Study Report preparation, and one less challenge for an impending Interim President.

Thank you for this opportunity, and we leave in anticipation that you and your committee will genuinely consider these recommendations. I will address any questions that you might have and further request that you contact me if (after today) any follow-up information is requested or needed