

MINUTES

LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

November 1, 2001

The Long-Range Planning Committee of the University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees met on November 1, 2001, in the University Suite of the University Center. In attendance were Trustees Bruce Baker, Louise Bruce, Walter Jermakowicz, and Harolyn Torain. Also in attendance were President H. Ray Hoops, Vice President for Advancement Sherrienne Standley, Vice President for Academic Affairs Robert Reid, and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Ed Jones.

Chair Bruce Baker called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

1. DISCUSSION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP (Attachment A)

Recent legislation passed by the Indiana General Assembly authorized state universities to serve as sponsors of charter schools. Dr. Jones presented a report on charter schools and the committee discussed the document in Attachment A. Discussion regarding charter schools will continue at a future meeting of the Board of Trustees.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m. Committee members were given a tour of the Scripps Howard Video Production Complex in the Liberal Arts Center.

Issues for Consideration

The need for improvement of public education has been at the forefront of public discussion at local, state, and federal levels for decades. Publicly supported charter schools are widely viewed as a viable alternative promoting educational choice and innovation. However, charter schools are controversial and have generated some opposition as was recently shown when the Trustees of Ball State University voted to sponsor charter schools on a statewide basis. Among the more commonly expressed concerns are that charter schools take money away from existing public schools, thus further eroding their financial bases, and that charter schools take away the best students. Evidence suggests that state and district money is diverted from local school corporations to charter schools that draw students from the district. However, research shows that "creaming" is not occurring in significant numbers primarily because of the focus and mission of most charter schools. Most charter schools are located in metropolitan areas, although some have been developed in rural areas mostly in response to consolidation issues. Most existing charter schools are at the elementary level.

The University of Southern Indiana has a history of active support for state educational, cultural, and social initiatives, some of which may have been controversial at the time. As examples, USI assumed management of Historic New Harmony, the theatre productions in New Harmony and Lincoln State Park, and the Southern Indiana Japanese School to support state interests.

There are several specific issues related to charter schools that should be addressed before a decision is made on sponsorship.

1. Even though there is substantial recent history of charter school implementation in other states, this is a new venture for the State of Indiana and the sponsors as well as organizers, parents and students, and the affected communities. The legislation is untried and parts are somewhat ambiguous.
2. The primary focus of the University's education programs has been on teacher training and preparation, professional development, assessment, and evaluation. While programs in school administration and leadership may come later, there is little practical experience in public K-12 school law, finance, and administration.
3. To implement a charter school sponsorship program will take an investment in staff and external resources to bring the program on line and to provide on-going project oversight.
4. Although there appears to be grant funding available from private sources and the federal government to support charter school development, the current Indiana formula to reimburse sponsors is inadequate to cover even direct costs during the start-up phase. The current formula depends on a significant volume of charters to reach a breakeven point.

6. There is limited direct funding from the state to cover start-up and implementation costs.
7. Opposition to the charter school movement may have a possible negative impact on University programs in the short term.
8. There are potential unknown liability issues for the Board and the University.

Possible Options for the Board to Consider

1. Authorize the sponsorship of charter schools using existing resources.
2. Partner with other state universities to share resources in establishing a statewide sponsorship process.
3. Delay the implementation of a sponsorship process until such time as need for and interest in charter schools is better known and state reimbursement or other potential sources of financial support are more certain.
4. Choose not to sponsor charter schools.
5. Other options.

Task Force on Charter School Review

Cynthia Brinker, Business Affairs
Philip Fisher, School of Business
Edward Jones, Academic Affairs/Extended Services (Chair)
Thomas Pickering, School of Education and Human Services

10/19/01