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Edwardsville Bulletin

To the Faculty and Staff of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Vol. 10, No. 35
April 13, 1978

MEMO TO: The University Community

FROM: Kenneth A. Shaw



SUBJECT: Final Report of the East St. Louis Center Evaluation Committee

Announcement

The matter of the nature and future of the commitment of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville to the citizens of East St. Louis is one of the most urgent priorities on our agenda. Our involvement in this area is a long-standing one; and in all candor, we must concede that many serious and valid questions concerning the intensity of our interest in East St. Louis and the character of our performance in pursuing that interest have been raised. We must respond to these questions with honesty and alacrity.

As you will recall, on March 24, 1977, I established an East St. Louis Center Evaluation Committee, with the following charge:

The Committee is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the East St. Louis Center as it carries out its stated mission and goals. The evaluation will include the items which follow.

1. Operations of the Center
 - a. Perceptions of the SIU-E students, faculty and staff in East St. Louis.
 - b. Personnel, organization, structure and operation of each component of the Center (EHE, PATC, etc.).
 - c. Perceptions of the East St. Louis townspeople.
2. Student outcomes
 - a. academic performance
 - b. personal/social development
3. Programmatic needs
4. Present physical facilities

The Committee was composed of the following: Dr. Miriam C. Dusenbery, Coordinator of Supplemental Instructional Program; Dr. Emil Jason, Assistant Vice-President for Special Programs and Minority Affairs and Acting Director of East St. Louis Center (ex-officio); Dr. John Reiner, Director of Institutional Research; Dr. W. Deane Wiley, Professor of Education; Dr. Don Keefe, Associate Professor of Education; Dr. Boyd Mitchell, Professor of Education; and Dr. C. E. Stikes, Chairperson.

For over a year, this committee studied the situation in East St. Louis intensively. On April 7, 1978, they submitted their final report, which addressed all elements of their charge. The members of the committee were unanimous in their findings and recommendations.

Copies of the final report, buttressed with supporting documentation in the form of twenty appendices, are available in the library. It is not a document that will inspire any smug satisfaction over the record of the past. It offers serious challenges for the future. It demands your attention, since this is a matter that can only be resolved after thorough discussion leading to the full commitment of the entire University community in effecting any necessary changes.

As briefly as I can, I will detail here the findings and recommendations of the report, in the hope that you will be motivated to study the document in its entirety. Let me note at the outset that in the course of its work, committee activity has already set in motion important and substantial improvements. For the energy, intelligence and dedication with which they have discharged the heavy responsibilities placed upon them, the members of the committee deserve our commendations and congratulations. More important, they also deserve to have their superb work taken with all the seriousness it merits.

The committee made several specific programmatic recommendations, including:

--A program emphasizing basic skill training for deprived students should be continued at the Center and educational programs should continue to focus on computational and language skills;

--The Performing Arts Training Center should be maintained and developed more fully;

--Degree credit courses offered at the Center or elsewhere in East St. Louis through the efforts of the Center, should continue to be offered and expanded wherever appropriate, in line with enrollment demand;

--Utilization of the specialized knowledge available in existing University units should be substantially increased through the provision of adult and continuing education, public service, and applied research at or through the Center;

--Future program development should occur at times and levels consistent with University goals and priorities;

--Consideration of the establishment of a School of Developmental Studies, of which the East St. Louis Center would be an integral part, headed by a dean and reporting to the chief academic officer of the University;

--The Learning Skills Center, faculty, and Student Development and Student Services should develop and implement a plan for coordination of diagnosis, prescription and monitoring of student change and progress;

--The chief Center administrator and staff should develop student work policies to encourage employment in jobs related to students' areas of study;

--The University administration should move as quickly as practical to complete the purchase of the Center building; and

--A Center library representative should be appointed to appropriate task forces established by Lovejoy Library's Management Review and Analysis Program Study Team.

The committee also recommended the development of research and evaluation procedures at the Center, and it said efforts should be made to acquaint students with the expectations and pressures attendant on university study. In addition, steps should be taken by the Center administration to improve morale, cooperation and the general climate of the Center, the committee report stated.

In regard to its recommendation concerning the establishment of the School of Developmental Studies, the committee report said the School should be dealt with as a normal, not special, University organization. "This presumes that all support services, including adequate plant accommodations, should be provided to the extent that other University units enjoy them, at a level designed to ensure the productivity of participants and the success of programs," the report stated.

The committee recommended that faculty members should teach only in their areas of competence, all teaching faculty should develop syllabi for their courses, and all appointments, assignments, promotions and tenure decisions should follow regular procedures of the proposed School.

The evaluation committee's report included further review of the Report on East St. Louis Center Management, released in August, 1977. At that time, the committee concluded that "past practices involving the Center, at all administrative levels of the University, were characterized by ambiguity, tolerance of inadequacies of management, mistrust, and subtle paternalism."

The committee also concluded that the current Center administration has accomplished substantial improvements in operations, but that these improvements have generated a degree of hostility among a minority of Center staff.

In the Management Report, the committee made 13 recommendations which the final report states have been fulfilled or are being pursued. "Increased levels of renovation and physical improvements, and a commitment to service levels comparable to those provided to the rest of the University, have been most notable," the report states.

"Although more improvement is necessary, conversations with staff at the Office of Admissions and Records, Academic Affairs, Personnel Office, Procurement, Storage and Supply, and Student Work and Financial Assistance, indicate that improvements have been substantial and positive," the report concludes.

The committee said its recommendations in the final report are based on its documentation of numerous continuing problems at the Center, including a need for improved academic performance of students; a need for change in "focus and direction" of the PATC; inadequate library resources, physical facilities, and student services; controversy over the operation of the

Learning Skills Center; evidence of marginal competence among some faculty; the absence of appropriate public service and continuing education activities "in a city whose citizens have more needs than most"; and the need for stronger links with the main campus.

As to the matter of the purchase of our present facility, let me emphasize that this has become necessary because the State has informed us that we can make no further improvements on property we do not own. A bill has been introduced in the current session of the General Assembly that would appropriate \$315,000 from funds presently available for this purpose. Any further progress of any substance depends upon passage of Senate Bill 1483, which enjoys the joint sponsorship of Senators Hall, Vadalabene, Hynes, Rock, Donnewald and Bruce. Thus prospects for its passage are good.

In the meantime, it is my judgment that appropriate elements of the report should receive the careful scrutiny of this community.