

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63130
OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH

EDWARD L. MACCORDY

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ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR
FOR RESEARCH

Howard W. Bremer, Patent Counsel
Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation
614 North Walnut Street
Madison, WI 53705

Re: Matters for Consideration by SUPA Trustees

Dear "Fellow Trustee",

Being privileged to have been elected a one-year SUPA trustee in Chicago, I would like to believe that a trustee actively serves the membership by continuously seeking to improve SUPA. Since apparently the only opportunity I will have to participate in this process is at a trustee's meeting, if called, a few hours before the next annual meeting, I would like to suggest a more dynamic mechanism through which the trustees could contribute.

The mechanism I propose is simply an on-going dialog among the trustees by correspondence during the year, much in the form of this letter. Under the by-laws this dialog would not constitute a meeting of the trustees but would allow a continuous exploration of issues in preparation for the trustees annual meeting. Hearing no voices in opposition, I proceed.

First, informally I understand that less than half of the SUPA membership attended the annual meeting. If so, especially considering the fine quality of this year's program, the future may not see an increase in this percentage. This raises the question of whether major activities, in addition to the annual meeting, are necessary to serve the needs of the entire membership. To start the discussion, I would suggest consideration of a professional instructional program on licensing and related matters. For years Irving Kayton of George Washington has conducted such courses, at 3 to 5 day institutes for the patent bar, which are of the highest professional quality. We could sponsor a similar program, under Larry's auspices, specifically directed at the university patent administrator's needs and his level of professional competence. This suggestion is not new, I know, but this and other means of serving the membership should be continuously explored.

The next item I throw out for discussion is the possibility of having the annual Chicago meeting next year be a joint one with the LES regional meeting, which is normally held at the same time and general location. Many university people have been seeking a bridge between SUPA and LES that would stimulate our interaction with the industry people in LES at a price most universities can afford. A joint meeting could be of significant interest to

the membership of both organizations and would attract more LES members than just those from the region. Obviously, each organization would have a segment reserved only for its own members, at least its business meeting.

Could I now raise a housekeeping question, that of either observing our by-laws or modifying them so our practices are reflected therein? Presently the by-laws require a quorum (50% of membership) to transact business at the annual meeting. I was told that a quorum was not present at the Chicago dinner meeting. If so, we have an illegal vice president and four illegal trustees. While this problem could be avoided in the future by accumulating proxies before a meeting that may not be the most desirable solution.

Another by-law problem involves meetings of the trustees. After being elected I inquired whether the trustees would meet, as required, immediately after the general business meeting. I have to agree that two trustees' meetings, one immediately before and the other immediately after the general meeting, doesn't appear to have enormous benefit, but again let's either comply with the by-laws or change them.

In the earlier days of SUPA, when the officers constituted a large percentage of the membership, it may have been desirable to have all committees staffed by the officers. With a membership of approximately 100, I doubt if this is a desirable practice now or for the future, if the general membership is to participate fully in the affairs of SUPA. For example, as fine a job as Ralph Davis has done, there were those who questioned why the nominating committee (2 officers, I think) could not find qualified members, other than their fellow officer, to present to the membership for the position of vice president. It would appear both feasible and most desirable to get maximum active involvement of the membership in the affairs of SUPA if it is to be a vital professional organization. One way to encourage this is to have a good committee structure and to have each committee staffed with a majority of non-officers and non-trustees.

A final topic comes from the concerns expressed at the business meeting, and afterwards, about the authority with which the President speaks and the position he takes on public issues. No criticism of Ray's tenure is intended. Rather, the essential question is how can the SUPA membership be sure that their organization's name will be used only by an authorized spokesman and only in a manner that accurately reflects the representative desires of the entire membership. Communications is the problem, not lack of trust. Should public positions taken by SUPA grow from a required procedure involving more than just presidential judgment or his consultation with a friend or two? Is this a desirable function for the trustees, the Resources Committee, or some new representative committee on "issues"?

Consider these topics to be on the table for free and open discussion (by correspondence) where every one of the trustees is encouraged to talk at the same time by circulating to the others their thoughts on these matters

and to raise new topics. We may even reach a consensus on one or two by next February.

Sincerely,

ELM:cb

Edward L. MacCordy
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research

CC: All SUPA Trustees