Nelson Lacey, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on FBS Football, echoed Senator Page’s statement on cooperation. About two years ago, the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on FBS Football was a polarizing event in the Faculty Senate. That afternoon, Professor Lacey sensed that some members of the Senate had a distrust of reports coming from the Athletic Department. He also sensed that some members of the Athletic Department had a distrust regarding a hidden agenda that might have been there for some members of the Faculty Senate. After two years of serving on this Ad Hoc Committee, Professor Lacey believes that distrust has evaporated. That is a very good sign. One thing that that fact tells Professor Lacey is that the data presented in the Committee’s Interim Report can be taken at good faith for what the financial picture of the football program is right now. Having said that, Professor Lacey emphasized that he was speaking of the Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on FBS Football. There were two other documents in the back of the room. One was titled “A UMass Football Index.” That document did not come from the Ad Hoc Committee. Professor Lacey had not seen that document previously, and therefore could not endorse any of the figures on that report. There was another report titled “A Failure to Launch.” That also did not come from the Ad Hoc Committee. Professor Lacey commented that this year’s presentation went much differently than the current one.

The charge of the Ad Hoc Committee is to analyze the facts about the financial status of the University’s football program. Right around the 10% mark in Senator Page’s previous comments, he stated: “Those are the facts. Let the debate continue.” After that point, when Senator Page used the term “we,” he was not referring to the Ad Hoc Committee; those were Senator Page’s personal opinions. The Ad Hoc Committee did not spend time talking about a lot of the things that Senator Page brought up. Professor Lacey spoke to the numbers in a different and briefer way. He does not see increased budgets as being necessarily bad, especially during an
incubation period. Higher budgets, in fact, may be necessary to build a program and create the benefits that have been alluded to by the previous Chancellor and from the Athletic Director. That is, enhanced budgets might be exactly what are necessary in order to get things like increased ticket sales, increased guarantees, and maybe even increased giving to the University related specifically to football. Just seeing a budget go up is not necessarily a bad thing. What Professor Lacey is seeing is that institutional support as a percent of the budget has actually decreased in 2012, 2013, and 2014. That is something that everyone on campus wants to see continue.

Professor Lacey’s personal view is that the multi-year upgrade program for football is off to a weak start. That is not terribly surprising, given that it will take some time for very young recruits to mature and perform better on the field. However, it is disappointing. Looking at this as an experiment or investment over, say, five years, we are at the lower end of the expectation of that timeline. That is very disappointing. Like Senator Page, Professor Lacey encouraged the Senators to take the financial figures, interpret them, and articulate their opinions.