

Report from the Committee on Administration on the Faculty Governance Survey

The Committee on Administration (COA) thanks the faculty for the good response to the Faculty Governance Survey and the many constructive suggestions for improving the Faculty Governance system. The response rate was 60% (135 out of 225). A survey conducted by the NCA Task Force on Faculty Governance in Spring, 1997 had a response rate of about 45% (60 of approximately 150-160). Based on the survey results and the comments from faculty members, COA was able to identify numerous problematic areas in the Faculty Governance System. Some problems require no faculty action. Clearly written guidelines, short training workshops for committee chairs, and minor alterations to committee operating procedures should remedy some problems. Solutions to other problems (e.g., frequent complaints about too many committees) likely require significant modifications to the system of faculty governance. Major changes that involve reducing the number of divisions from 4 to 3, reducing the number of committees through consolidation, and/or reducing the number of faculty members on committees should be made after careful deliberation and extensive debate among the faculty. There is, however, general consensus among the faculty respondents to the survey on solutions to some problems that might be implemented without significant modifications to the Faculty Governance system. COA offers three motions that we think captures this consensus and that we think will begin to solve the following problems:

- (1) Committee effectiveness sometimes suffers from poor leadership by committee chairs, inexperienced chairs, inexperienced members, and lack of “institutional memory.”
- (2) Untenured faculty members feel pressured to serve on the coordinating committees (CAPP, MAO, and SLAAC), FDC, or COA to fulfill the service requirement for tenure.
- (3) Some untenured faculty members are serving on committees primarily to fulfill the service requirement for tenure.
- (4) Some untenured faculty members serving on committees may be intimidated or influenced by senior faculty members or administrators.

Motion to make changes to Article VII.B.1 of the By-Laws and Standing Rules of the Faculty, to take effect at the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year (see the agenda for the text of the motion).

Explanation: This motion requires that faculty members elected to at large positions on CAPP, MAO, SLAAC, FDC, and COA must be tenured. This ensures that at least one-third of the faculty members serving on these committees are tenured. Untenured faculty members will still be eligible for election to these committees as divisional representatives. Untenured faculty members also can be elected to numerous other standing committees as either divisional or at large representatives. The change will take effect at the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year. Untenured faculty members presently serving in at large positions will be allowed to complete their term of service. Untenured faculty members remain eligible for election to at large positions during the 2006-07 academic year.

Justification: Two questions on the survey reveal that a majority of faculty members believe that having a disproportionately high number of untenured faculty members serving on CAPP, MAO, SLAAC, FDC, and COA is undesirable and that the problem could be addressed by requiring that some proportion of these committees be composed of tenured faculty members. Question #7 (134 responses) on the Faculty Governance Survey asked:

Some university committees (e.g., this year’s MAO and SLAAC) are comprised overwhelmingly of untenured faculty members. How do you feel about this?
40% a serious problem 37% somewhat of a problem 18% not a problem 4% unsure

Question #9 (128 responses) on the survey asked:

Some faculty have suggested requiring that all or a proportion of CAPP, COA, MAO, SLAAC, and FDC be comprised of tenured faculty. What do you think about this?
41% strongly in favor 23% somewhat in favor 13% unsure 13% somewhat opposed 9% strongly opposed

Comments about the exact proportion of tenured/untenured members varied widely, but many suggestions fell somewhere in the range of one-third to two-thirds tenured faculty members. The motion ensures that at least a third of the faculty members on these committees will be tenured.

Motion to make changes to Article VII.C of the By-Laws and Standing Rules of the Faculty, to take effect at the beginning of the 2008-09 academic year (see the agenda for the text of the motion).

Explanation: This motion requires that the chairs of CAPP, MAO, SLAAC, FDC, and COA must be tenured. Because the stipulation takes effect at the beginning of the 2008-09 academic year, untenured faculty still will be eligible to chair these committees during the 2007-08 academic year.

Justification: The written comments in response to questions #3 and #4 in the survey indicate that committee chairs play a pivotal role in the effectiveness of committees. Strong leadership by the chair is a significant contributing factor in making committee work a positive or productive experience. Poor leadership by the chair and lack of organizational skills are frequently cited as factors that contribute to making committee work frustrating or unproductive. Furthermore, many faculty members feel that it simply is not a good idea for untenured faculty members to chair committees. Although requiring that chairs be tenured does not necessarily remedy the problem, it does ensure that chairs will have some familiarity with the operating procedures of the faculty governance system. The COA is preparing a guidelines document for chairs of committees and urges that there be a yearly training workshop for newly-elected committee chairs. We believe that the tenure requirement, the guidelines document, and the workshop will improve the effectiveness of chairs and lead to an overall improvement in the effectiveness and productivity of committees.

Motion to make changes to Article VII.B of the By-Laws and Standing Rules of the Faculty, to take effect at the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year (see agenda for the text of the motion).

Explanation: Faculty members will be ineligible for election to all standing committees in the year preceding an approved leave.

Justification: This motion makes formal what is almost current practice. Very few faculty members allow themselves to be elected to a committee in the year preceding a leave. More problematic are those committees disproportionately made up of one-semester or one-year replacement members, a situation that arises when two or more committee members have leaves scheduled during the second or third year of a three-year committee term. When committee members go on leave during their committee terms of service, there is less than optimal continuity for the committee's work from year to year because replacement members often lack a good sense of the issues and may have missed important discussions and debates. COA will continue to discuss this problem and welcomes suggestions from the faculty. We encourage faculty members planning leaves to give priority during the nominating procedure to faculty members who will not be on leave during the term of service. Divisional nominating committees should likewise endeavor to present candidates for election who will not be on leave during the term of service.

COA believes that these changes will bring about the desired effects of decreasing the proportion of untenured faculty members serving on committees and improving the effectiveness and productivity of committees. COA recommends that we make clear to untenured faculty members that serving on major standing committees is not a requirement for successful fulfillment of the service component for tenure or promotion. We encourage Personnel Committees, COF, and the Administration to communicate this clearly to untenured faculty members throughout the probationary period.

Committee on Administration Members

Jackie Roberts (Chair)
Susan Anthony
Beth Benedix
Nancy Davis
Carl Huffman
Marcia McKelligan
Fred Soster
Neal Abraham

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