

Faculty Governance Committee  
May 10, 2017

Present: Howard Brooks, Tim Good, Bryan Hanson, Elissa Harbert, Bob Hershberger, Glen Kuecker (chair), Pam Propsom (note-taker), Francesca Seaman

Guests: Anne Harris (VPAA), Mark McCoy (President)

Draft document regarding faculty role in recruitment, retention, and review of administrators whose roles intersect with faculty work. Governance Committee has been working on this document and sent a draft to the VPAA and the President for feedback. The President indicated he endorses the idea of shared governance and that the VPAA would take the lead on working through the document with us. From his “35,000 foot” perspective, in hiring cabinet members who have academic status there should have input from faculty, staff, and students. He has concerns with the Governance document’s statements regarding open presidential searches given that increasingly these are closed because candidates are afraid of jeopardizing their current position if it is known that they are on the market. The president argued that closed searches will yield the largest and strongest pool, but these searches still have faculty and student input. He doesn’t anticipate that our Board of Trustees will endorse Governance’s recommendation for an open presidential search, even with regard to the final candidates. He argued that we could certainly start the search as an open search process, but then when candidates inquire about applying they may not agree to move forward unless it is a closed search and it is at this point that it might become a closed search.

The intent Governance’s document is to address positions “with rank of” faculty. We agreed that it is important to get the language right. The VPAA suggested that the registrar should probably be included in our list of positions addressed as well.

The president is in agreement with the Governance draft with regard to recruitment and review issues. There should be clear term lengths, although we may need to discuss how these reviews actually occur. The president believes that Governance and he are at complete odds with regard to the proposed retention of cabinet members with faculty status; he thinks it would be a bad policy for the institution to have faculty policies of control of retention of people in these positions. President McCoy reported that he had checked in with other organizations (e.g., colleges in the GLCA and CIC) and said no one else does this. There was some disagreement about the AGB (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges) position on this issue. The president doesn’t believe that AAUP’s recommendations concerning retention of cabinet members are generally accepted by most other institutions as “best practices.”

It is the Board of Trustees’ sole responsibility for retention of the president, and therefore President McCoy disagreed with Governance Committee’s recommendation for retention of the president. One person asked whether his concern is just with regard to faculty review of the president or if it applies to all cabinet-level positions. The president indicated that it applied to all cabinet-level positions and a questioner argued that it might be protective for

the president if he or she could involve a faculty committee in retaining administrators with faculty status; the move would have greater credibility and support among the university community and any firing might be perceived as less capricious. McCoy suggested that perhaps the president could appear before Governance to explain the decision, within legal boundaries allowed, before the decision and announcement is made.

There was disagreement regarding whether an administrator who has been dismissed can go to Review Committee for appeal. The president believes that this is a tortured interpretation of the Handbook. He affirmed those policies for faculty as faculty but not as administrators.

Anne pointed out that our Handbook doesn't really include a conflict resolution process. How do faculty have a mechanism for expressing their concerns regarding administrators, before it comes to a vote of "no confidence"? All agreed that our Handbook needs to be clear and procedures "airtight" so that we are not at risk of a lawsuit.

The president encouraged the Governance Committee to look at "best practices" and not go to our Board of Trustees with a proposal that is outside of usual boundaries.

We had general agreement on all elements of Governance's proposal except with regard to the open presidential search and retention, but we will need to work on process details (e.g., how faculty can express concerns about an administrator, how the president might bring her or his concerns regarding an administrator to a faculty committee).

Another issue that arose during the discussion is the hiring of administrators with tenure: how does this influence departments in which this person might end up if the administrative job doesn't work out, departments that haven't had a role in the hiring or decision-making process? Could departments be more involved in the hiring process? President suggested that this could become part of the faculty role in the search process, to consider the implications of tenure. The principle is to honor tenure, but also perhaps have some flexibility (e.g., tenure in which department or shared between departments); perhaps greater consultation with faculty and departments.

Anne indicated that she had lots of comments on the document, but we were out of time today. We will find a time to meet during Finals Week.

All Governance Committee members gave Glen a grateful round of applause for his leadership and diligence this semester as the Chair of the Governance Committee!