

Suggestions for Preparing Reports and Announcements for Faculty Meetings

Dave Berque, November 2008

I. Reports versus Written Announcements:

Business at a faculty meeting can be divided into two categories:

- Oral Reports
- Written Announcements and Supporting Materials

In some cases a committee or individual will only make an oral report, in some cases a committee or individual will only offer written announcements (with a presumed willingness to answer questions) and in some cases an oral report will be supported by material in the "Written Announcements and Supporting Materials" section - thus avoiding the need to read details as part of the report.

Admittedly, it is often difficult to determine which topics are best given via an oral report, and which are best given by written announcement. While this document is intended to help clarify the differences, there will often be gray areas -- consultation with the chair of the faculty is encouraged in these situations.

In general, announcements of specific deadlines, appointments to committees, dates and events are best provided as a written announcement rather than through an oral report. This has the advantage of providing the assembly with a written record of announcement. Similarly, lists of names (people to contact about an issue, members of a committee or task force, etc.) are best provided only through a written report. In some cases, most notably when offering congratulations for a significant achievement or thanks for a significant undertaking, it may be appropriate to read names. In such cases additional information, such as detailed award titles and abstracts, are best provided only as supporting materials rather than read out loud.

On the other hand, oral reports are typically the best way to share what a committee has been working on, what a committee plans to work on, or what a committee expects to bring to the floor of the faculty for debate at a future meeting.

The following test may be helpful in determining how you wish to present an item: If the information is nuanced or weighty it is probably appropriate for an oral report. However, if the information is merely factual or routine it is best left to a written announcement.

Often oral reports and written announcements can work together. For example, if MAO plans to use a radically different system for accepting proposals for new courses, the committee chair might choose to report orally on the reasoning for the new system. However, the specific deadlines that are required by the new system would likely only appear in the written section of the agenda (see next page). The oral report would simply say "see the details on the agenda."

II. Submitting Information for the Agenda:

When submitting information to appear on the agenda it is helpful if you are clear about what will be delivered orally and what will be provided only as written supporting information. An example, showing

a committee that has an oral report, written announcements, and supporting information, appears below. Note that it is extremely helpful if the report section contains at least high level descriptions of the major topics that will be part of the report. For example, if the oral report will include extending congratulations to award winners, with additional information to be provided in writing only, this should ideally be indicated on the agenda as shown below between the two rows of asterisks. To the extent possible, please submit your materials in a format that approximates this, or at least in a format that clearly suggests how the items you submit should be categorized.

Faculty Development Committee - FDC (Chair's Name Goes Here)

Oral Report

- A. Note that the oral report might consist only of the text “FDC’s report consists of an offer to answer questions.”
- B. Motion (to be voted on) Text of motion here.
- C. Update on Committee Discussions of Policy Change ABC
- D. Update on Committee Discussions of Topic DEF
- E. Announcement of Faculty Fellowship Award Recipients
(See Written Announcements and Supporting Materials for Titles and Abstracts)

Written Announcements and Supporting Materials

- A. The annual Faculty Achievement Program will take place on a certain date at a certain location. RSVP to a certain person by a certain date.
- B. List of Titles and Abstracts of Award Recipients
List of recipients, titles and other information would go here.

III. Providing the Written Agenda and the Text of an Oral Report

If you plan to read all or part of your oral report from prepared text, please consider sharing an electronic version of your notes with the chair and secretary of the faculty prior to the meeting (even if only 5 minutes prior to the meeting). If you plan to talk extemporaneously, or if you will be working from non-electronic notes, there is no need for you to send anything to us. And, of course, you are free to deviate from any written remarks you do provide in advance.