

## **Annual Report of the Executive Committee to the Faculty of Arts, Sciences & Engineering for the Academic Year 2010-2011**

May, 12, 2011

### Executive Committee (Committee) Members:

Associate Professor Chris Swan (co-chair) - Civil & Environmental Engineering

Professor Fred Rothbaum (co-chair) - Child Development

Associate Professor Jeanne Penvenne - History

Associate Professor Steven Hirsch - Classics

Professor Mary Jane Shultz - Chemistry

Professor Roger Tobin - Physics/Astronomy

### Ex-officio:

Dean Joanne Berger-Sweeney - School of Arts and Sciences

Dean Linda Abriola - School of Engineering

### Issues Discussed during 2010-11 academic year:

At regularly scheduled meetings (approximately every other week), the Committee discussed new and old topics related to proposals to be brought to the full AS&E faculty by various AS&E committees as well as new initiatives and items that could be brought before the full faculty for further discussion. Additional information is available at the AS&E website which provides minutes of our meetings over the past year. Among the issues discussed by the Committee were:

- Learning Management System – Efforts continue to transfer from current Blackboard to open-source Sakai systems. Plans are to have AS&E completely switch to the Sakai system by Fall 2011.
- Discussion of the proposed changes to workings and procedures of the Grievance Panel (GP) dominated a number of meetings. Issues revolved around the role that faculty can and should play in grievances brought to the GP and if certain grievances, especially those in areas affected by recent changes in state and federal rulings and laws, should be removed from the purview of the panel. The Committee served as a sounding board to proposed changes and, when asked, attempted to serve as an intermediary to discussion with the GP and administration.

Efforts to address the proposed changes to GP processes occurred throughout the year including meeting with the chair of GP (Mark Cronin-Golumb), Committee discussions with faculty and administration officials on appropriate language for the proposed changes, and discussion of proposed changes in AS&E meetings. Ultimately, significant faculty resistance and reservations about potential changes caused the matter to be tabled for further discussion by AS&E faculty during the AS&E meetings next year.

- Proposed changes to the methods and processes used for student course evaluation (SCE). Changes in student course evaluations were necessitated due to the age of the equipment used to process current evaluation forms. In AY 2009-2010, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) had taken up this issue with a broad proposal to not only change from written forms to

an on-line process, but to also re-examine the SCE process and explore alternatives. The final proposal, passed by the AS&E faculty, agreed to move to an on-line version of the existing form and to set-up an ad-hoc committee to explore changes to the SCE process.

- Changes to the by-laws of the Athletic Committee were discussed at a number of Committee meetings as well. A final version of by-law changes; notably changes in committee membership, meeting frequency, and what and how issues can be brought before it, were discussed and ultimately passed by the AS&E faculty.
- Other issues discussed by the Committee:
  - Status of faculty handbook – in the hands of the deans of A&S and E
  - Increased cooperation and collaboration between faculty committees and administrations of AS&E.
  - Role of Committee in faculty governance – i.e., not as a gatekeeper of issues to be brought before the AS&E faculty, but as a ‘sounding board’ for discussion and final presentation to AS&E.
  - Administration changes – discussions concerning potential changes in duties and responsibilities of the Dean for Undergraduate Education and the impending changes in Provost and President. These changes will have long-term implications on faculty.
  - Work Life Taskforce –The Task Force was appointed in mid-April 2010 and intended to report out in April of 2011. The HERI data -- an important data set for the Task Force -- was not available until mid-March 2011. Therefore, the Task Force requested an extension of its mandate until December 2011. Major issues to be addressed are the sharing of gathered data followed by presentation and implementation of taskforce recommendations.
  - The committee requested that a database be created that includes faculty participation on AS&E committees over the last two years. There is a general impression that FT faculty are not always available for service options, despite the fact that service is important.

Throughout the year, one over-riding issue was the concern about a possible decrease in faculty participation in issues related to governance. The Committee believes more formal discussions with the faculty are needed; ones that will address ways to increase engagement – whether through committee participation or increased access to, and frequency in reporting by, committees. As in past years, the Committee held two luncheons with AS&E committee chairs (or a designate). Primary issues/concerns expressed by committee chairs centered around two governance concerns: 1) relevance of their committee efforts - where some chairs perceived administrators do not believe that faculty involvement, through their committee’s efforts, is necessary; and 2) many chairs feel a lack of compensation; e.g., a formal recognition, monetary stipend, and/or appropriate valuation in annual faculty review, deters faculty involvement in committees as well as other governance concerns. The Committee will focus its work on these and other governance issues over the coming year.

We encourage all members of the AS&E faculty as well as administrators to make suggestions about items of importance. This will help the committee focus on meaningful issues as they arise.