A&S&E Committee on Committees
Annual Report 2004–2005

This year, the Committee on Committees (ComCom) solicited candidates for a special election to replace individuals who either were on leave or had stepped down before the appointed end of their terms. A second annual election was held to replace individuals whose terms were expiring. The committee also contacted committee conveners in the fall semester to ensure that committees meet and choose a chair. The final meeting of the year is the “committee assignments” meeting that tries to match “faculty committee selection sheet” requests to available openings. At the final meeting, the committee also selected Karen Panetta to continue to serve as the ComCom chair next year.

Election Issues

For the annual election, the committee gave out nomination ballots at the Arts and Sciences faculty meeting. Twelve individuals returned the forms this year. The ComCom had to make up the difference by contacting more than 165 eligible faculty members. This process took approximately three months of calls, emails, and follow-up calls. The committee thought it would be prudent to report the most popular reasons for declined responses to the Executive Committee. These responses appear below, along with the number of individuals citing each reason in parentheses. Please note that these are comments from faculty members and do not reflect or represent the opinions of the ComCom.

- With the move towards more research, there is no time for committee work. (47)
- Family issues such as medical issues and childrearing preclude serving. (22)
- Committee membership involves too much work with little ability to make an impact. (Relates to the Budget and Priorities, Tenure and Promotion, and Executive Committees.) (15)
- Tenure and promotion for lateral hires is easier for outsiders than for internal promotions and occurs during the summer. This is outside the elected T&P committee’s term and undermines the integrity of the process. (25)
- The university is limiting benefits to faculty by denying admission to their children. (5)

Election Bylaw Issues

The bylaws for elections state that there must be two candidates for each available position. This should be added into the ComCom description and workload so that future members of this committee are aware of the requirement. The bylaw also says that the ballot must be posted one week before the elections. This should also be included in the ComCom workload description.

There have been elections held in the past, where this bylaw was not met. Given the amount of work and the extremely large number of faculty declining to serve, we recommend that the bylaws be changed to say, “When possible, there should be two candidates for each position.”

As the bylaw currently stands, if two candidates cannot be found, we wonder what action we should take. Should we continue to postpone elections until two candidates can be found? Appeal to the faculty to override the bylaw to hold the elections? Appeal to the provost and the president
to allow the election? We believe the Executive Committee can help us find the appropriate solution.

Conveners of Committees

Each fall, we ask someone from each committee to organize and hold the first meeting with the agenda being to choose a chair. After trying this approach for a year and having too many individuals decline, we decided to have the ComCom assign conveners. Many individuals contacted the committee to express their dismay at being chosen without consultation.

We suggest a bylaw be added to all committees stating that a convener is by default the person with the most experience on the committee and that his/her role is to convene the first meeting to select a chair.

Open Issues

What are the rules for accepting nominations? Many of the nomination forms we received were sent anonymously. Some individuals emailed committee members requesting to serve; others wanted us to retrieve old ballots and contact individuals who did not win in previous elections. Are there rules on this?

Suggestions and Requests

We suggest that each committee chair write up more detail for the committee description and workload so that new committee members understand how to implement the tasks required for their committees. As an example, for Comcom, new members and chairs need to know the process for selecting candidates, how to create ballots, where to post ballots, and how to hold an election.

We propose to remove the question on the faculty committee selection form, “Do you want to be removed from a committee?” Too many individuals are elected and then stepping down without good cause because they feel its acceptable since we offer it on the form.

With the numerous responses and questions we received about the operation of T&P with regard to lateral hires, we would like to ask whether there should be a time requirement for faculty to be at Tufts before being able to serve on the T&P, like there is for the Executive Committee.

Many individuals asked our committee why T&P elections are held over a year in advance. This practice was established by our former chair, Boris Hassleblatt, and we believe it is a good one. By having elections in advance, department chairs have time to find substitutes to replace the T&P committee member who will receive a course release for serving on the T&P. We request that this be communicated to the Tufts faculty.

Since the major issue our committee has continually encountered is finding willing candidates for committee service, we believe that sending lists to department chairs detailing which members of the department are currently serving or not serving on a committee would be beneficial.

To date, we do not have any software in place to automate this process. All data is provided by Catherine Doheney manually.

This is a very time-consuming task and could be simplified if we were given a budget to develop/purchase software to automate the entire Tufts committee website. This would include maintaining accurate records of who is on leave and automatically generating a list of necessary

June 21, 2005.
positions to be filled each semester. We have had issues where people on leave were dropped from a committee.

We also rely on text-base committee selection forms that have to be tabulated and sorted manually. The proposed software would allow faculty members to fill out the form online and update the master committee database. All committee information would be up to date, allowing us to retrieve and sort information by faculty member, department, discipline, expiration of terms, or any other criteria.

Karen Panetta suggests Microsoft Project Enterprise Server software to accomplish this and funds to pay a student to work on the project.

Finally, we have added a statement to the faculty committee selection form to the effect that if a faculty member does not submit a form, the committee will automatically assign him/her to a committee. This is the first year we have done this and I anticipate that we will have many disgruntled faculty contacting us in the fall to let us know they disapprove of this practice. We request that the Executive Committee support us by endorsing this as an acceptable policy. We are also open to any suggestions on how to get faculty to step forward for committee service in a less assertive manner.

The committee would like to acknowledge Ms. Cathy Doheney and her assistant Brittany Mullens for all their support and guidance.

Submitted by Karen Panetta, Committee Chair