Primary Committee Business

The primary business of the Committee on Committees (ComCom) was to fill elected and appointed committees. There are three ways in which this occurred.

An election was held during the spring 2007 semester to replace individuals on elected committees whose terms had expired. On February 28, 2007, the ComCom gave out nomination ballots at the A&S&E faculty meeting. Elections were then held at the March 28, 2007, meeting.

Based on the spring 2007 faculty survey, the ComCom selected individuals to fill various openings on appointed committees and appointed conveners whose responsibility is to convene the first meeting of the committee during the fall 2007 semester. Approximately 30 percent (144 members) of the faculty submitted their surveys online. Although this percentage return is not as high as anticipated, it was more than adequate to fill all the necessary committee vacancies.

At various times throughout the year, replacements were found for individuals on leave or who stepped down before the appointed end of their terms. In addition, conveners for committees were contacted to ensure that chairs were selected so that the committees were operational.

Committee Turnover

Harry Bernheim’s and Holly Taylor’s terms on the ComCom end as of May 31, 2007. Newly elected committee members include Lisa Shin, psychology, 2007–2012, and Ina McCabe, history, 2007–2012. In addition, Bernhard Martin has agreed to chair the ComCom for the 2007–2008 academic year. We also agreed that chairs generally only need to serve a one-year term to distribute the workload of this committee more fairly.

Conveners of Committees

We notified individuals one semester in advance that they were going to be assigned as conveners for the following year. By getting them to agree to these roles now, all committees should be prepared for the next academic year.

Software Database Management System to Streamline Committee Functions

In the past, Cathy Doheney and her staff managed important database management tasks to provide the ComCom with the information needed to fill committees in a timely fashion. That process could be improved significantly as described below. In an effort to streamline the committee selection and election process, we met with the Tufts Information Technology Services (ITS) to develop a system. The detailed computer specifications previously developed by Karen Panetta (previous chair of the ComCom) were deemed infeasible because they required merging two databases, one of which contains confidential information, and such a task was considered
too difficult for ITS to implement. Instead ITS staff conceived an alternative plan with the approval of Inez McCarthy, Marc Miller, and Cathy Doheney. The agreement was to develop an information system for improving the workflow of the ComCom without creating another nonauthoritative faculty data source. Additionally, ITS sought permission to make some structural changes to the existing faculty Microsoft Access database to support the project. The project goals are as follows.

ITS would create an application that faculty members could fill out and submit online. This data would be used to create an XML file that would be emailed to Cathy Doheney as an attachment.

ITS would also design an interface to the Access faculty database that would allow this XML attachment to be imported into the system after Cathy Doheney (or someone on her staff) reviewed it for accuracy. The interface would not require Cathy or her staff to rekey any of the data.

Finally, ITS would design a number of reports that would allow ComCom members to retrieve the summary data of interest.

The current faculty database is undergoing some changes to avoid long-term support issues that have plagued it in the past. The plan is for this project to be rolled into the redesign of the database. ITS staff will meet with the developers to explain our requirements. Information from this meeting would then be used by ITS to create the web form and email process. The software development process is underway and we expect to be able to implement the system during next year’s committee selection process.

Open Issues

Although the committee successfully ran elections for elected committees and filled appointed committees, recruitment for both elected and appointed committees remains difficult. As stated above, only 30 percent of faculty returned surveys, which means 70 percent did not. The ComCom would appreciate if department chairs and deans gave additional emphasis to the importance of faculty committees.

Acknowledgments

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Respectfully Submitted,

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