Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Faculties of Arts, Sciences and Engineering

Academic Year 2014-2015

Members of the Committee

Professor Fulton Gonzalez, co-chair
Professor Christiane Zehl Romero, co-chair
Associate Professor Harry Bernheim
Associate Professor Alva Couch
Professor Judith Haber
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Introduction

The Committee’s charge is to work with the President, Provost, and the Deans to set the agenda for AS&E faculty meetings, to serve as liaison between Faculty and Administration and to coordinate and channel the concerns of the Faculty and its committees. The academic year 2014-2015 was a particularly challenging one and left little time for the committee to develop and deal with its own agenda. The main issues this academic year concerned faculty governance.

Faculty Governance in AS&E

The committee spent considerable time on the Provost’s proposal to reorganize AS&E and have Admissions and Financial Aid, Athletics, the Graduate School and Student Services (the Dowling operation) report directly to his office. One of the reasons given was that the appointment of new Deans for both Arts and Sciences and Engineering and a new Athletics Director offered a unique opportunity to change reporting structures and that these structures would alleviate a number of problems. The Faculty on the whole was not convinced by the urgency of the proposed changes or by the cogency of the arguments. This was reflected in a resolution overwhelmingly approved by the faculty present in the September AS&E Faculty Forum and subsequently endorsed by twenty-six departments and programs, calling for the proposals to be reviewed by appropriate committees and voted on by the faculty. To carry out the Faculty’s resolution the Executive Committee identified relevant faculty committees -- Admissions and Financial Aid, Athletics, Budget and Priorities, the Faculty Advisory Board for Administration (FAB) – to look more closely into the proposed structural changes and make recommendations. While they proposed minor improvements, they found no compelling reasons to change current reporting structures and recommended that the present responsibilities of the Deans (of AS, E, and GSAS) be kept in place and that they work together. The Faculty voted overwhelmingly in favor of their recommendations. However, at the request of the Provost and with the support of a less
than enthusiastic faculty vote, an exception was made for the Director of Athletics. That Office from now on will report directly to the Provost.

*Action for next year:* the Committee still needs to act on last year’s recommendation that senior university leadership and faculty decide if a bylaw change should be undertaken to institutionalize the role of the committee and its chairs as presiding officer for AS&E faculty meetings. We also recommend that the Committee review the charges to the various committees, consider the creation of a committee dealing with aspects of student life and services which are not served by current committees, and finally, discuss the possible uses of electronic ballots.

**Cross University Faculty Governance**

At the invitation of the Provost, a number of the members of the committee served on a working group of representatives of all schools in the university (chaired by the Provost). A range of issues were discussed, but eventually Vice Provost Kevin Dunn asked and the Executive Committee agreed that the representatives to this working group should be elected members from the various schools. A&S held an election and appointed two faculty members, Engineering also appointed two representatives. Presumably this working group will start up in the summer of 2015 and will propose guidelines for a university-wide committee, which will be advisory to the Provost and his office. As soon as the working group reaches a consensus, the AS&E representatives will report back to their Faculty.

*Action for next year:* Monitor the deliberations of the university-wide working group.

**Consultation with Committee Chairs**

In February, we continued our practice of holding lunch meetings with the chairs of standing committees to solicit their views about issues that the committee should address. Among the chief concerns that were raised were: the lack of response on the part of members of the Administration to committee recommendations on the one hand, and in part related to that the lack of attendance and involvement of some faculty members in their chosen/assigned committees.

*Action for next year:* Follow-up on last year’s recommendation concerning the strengthening of the role of the Committee on Budget and Priorities and to confer with committees on their workload, participation and efficiency.

**Committee Chairs for 2015-2016**

The Committee co-chairs for next year will be Professors Judith Haber and Roger Tobin.

Respectfully submitted

Christiane Zehl Romero and Fulton Gonzalez