In the fall semester of 2013, Provost Harris called together a group of faculty members to discuss the state of faculty governance at Tufts. This group consisted of one representative from each school that employs full-time faculty; whenever possible, these members were drawn from elected leadership positions. The group met several times for informal discussions. In our last meeting, we decided to recommend to the faculty of the individual schools the creation of a university-wide faculty governance body. We intend the following document as a starting place for a discussion about the desirability – as well as the shape, size and composition – of such a body.

Rationale for University-wide Faculty Governance

Institutions of higher learning have been evolving to meet changing demands in areas such as compliance with government regulations, increases in costs for research infrastructure, competition for tuition revenue, and, most importantly, the necessity of working across disciplinary boundaries. Most universities of the size and complexity of Tufts have established some form of faculty body or bodies to facilitate shared governance across all the schools. These governance bodies ensure that the voice of the faculty is heard on issues that affect more than one school; in doing so, these bodies greatly enhance the quality of decision-making as well as creating a sense of shared community.

The lack of such structures at Tufts makes it difficult for the administration to gather advice on initiatives it is considering and deprives the faculty of a mechanism for bringing their own concerns to the administration in a way that carries the authority of the faculty as a whole. In addition, by limiting faculty governance to the school level, we are missing the opportunity for faculty across the university to reach a greater understanding of shared goals and concerns. We believe that by instituting a university-wide structure of faculty governance we can improve faculty input on crucial issues, make decisions more efficiently but also more equitably, and, above all, take an important step toward an even more comprehensive, integrated university.

The definition, role and purview of the faculty within a model of shared governance
The Bylaws of the Trustees of Tufts College (7.3.) define the limits of the faculty’s authority as that which pertains to "the oversight and control of the student body." The bylaws of the schools echo this definition of the faculty's role as a decision-making body. This definition, however, by no means limits the scope of faculty’s role in shared governance. Any meaningful version of university-wide governance must allow for the faculty to deliberate upon any issue that pertains to the academic mission of the university and to consult with and advise the administration on such issues.

Examples of issues that might fall under the purview of a university-wide governance body include:

- The academic calendar. At present there is not a unified academic calendar for the schools, and this lack creates scheduling difficulty for faculty, staff and students.
- Course credits. NEASC, our accrediting body, has asked us to review our system of awarding academic credit, and there is no faculty body to oversee this process.
- Consultation on budgetary priorities.
- The faculty merit raise process.
- Research compliance.
- Cross-school initiatives.

While there are aspects of many of these examples that are school-specific and therefore within the purview of individual school faculties, the over-arching consistency in high-level policy and for faculty input on cross-school aspects of these questions make a university-wide faculty body a crucial part of shared governance. A faculty senate could also provide an important advisory role to school-specific governance bodies, alerting them to wider contexts of questions they are considering.

**Process**

As a next step, each school faculty should elect or nominate by April 1 two representatives to a task force that would supersede our working group. This task force, working through established structures of school-based governance, would: develop a process for gathering input from the faculty at large; draft a proposal based on that input; gather additional input on the proposal; and, finally, lead the process of ratifying the new governance structure. The provost's office will provide support for this process, but the process will remain in the hands of the task force and the faculty it represents.