

Ad Hoc University-Wide Governance Committee
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Governance
Committee

July 28, 2004

Minutes

Present: J. Acker, R. Bangert-Drowns, J. Bartow, B. Carlson, P. Eppard,
M.
Fogelman

R. Geer, J. Pipkin, L. Schell, G. Singh, B. Via, J.

Wyckoff

Guest: Interim President John Ryan

Professor Acker proposed that the Committee attempt to adhere to the following

timeline for completion of its business:

- Aug. 4—consider subcommittee issues and alternative models
- Aug. 11—additional discussion of subcommittee issues and models; attempt to achieve consensus
- Aug. 18—presentation and consideration of subcommittee draft reports
- Aug. 25—presentation and consideration of proposed committee report; attempt to achieve consensus about “final” committee report
- Mid-September—presentation and discussion of committee report with academic units and constituencies
- Late September—reconvening of committee, discussion of feedback from academic units and constituencies, preparation of final report
- Oct. 1—submission of final report to University Senate

Some committee members expressed reservations about the proposed schedule. It

was pointed out that several committee members would be unavailable for meetings

during the upcoming weeks. Questions also were raised about whether the committee would be able to move sufficiently rapidly to comply with the proposed

schedule. In particular, some members suggested that additional time could be

needed to contact peer and other comparison institutions, and to invite potential guests (from other institutions and perhaps also from UAlbany) to

discuss the operation of alternative governance models and other issues. It was

suggested that Jayne Van Denburgh be requested to assist the committee by contacting peer institutions to attempt to ascertain whom committee members might contact to discuss relevant issues. It was agreed that the subcommittees should attempt to collect information from at least the following institutions: Florida State University, Rutgers University, SUNY-Binghamton, SUNY-Buffalo, SUNY-Stony Brook, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and the University of South Carolina. All of those institutions were included on the earlier-distributed list of peer and aspirational peer institutions, and they were selected to provide a somewhat diverse mix from that list.

Questions were raised about what matters should be included in subcommittee reports, and in particular whether the reports should address the specific Faculty Bylaw and Senate Charter provisions implicated by any recommendations. It was suggested that primary focus should be on (1) identifying alternative models or approaches to address the discrete issues considered by the respective subcommittees, and (2) identifying the preferred model or approach with respect to each issue, accompanied by an explanation or justification of those preferences. However, in addition to addressing those primary factors, it was suggested that it would be useful for the reports to identify the specific Bylaw and Charter provisions that might be affected if recommended changes were enacted.

Interim President Ryan then appeared before the committee in response to the invitation the committee had previously extended. He indicated that the University presently had an opportunity to evaluate whether schools and colleges would benefit from more local autonomy in matters of governance under the general umbrella of a University Senate. He suggested that it was reasonable to inquire whether increased autonomy would involve faculty in more decision making at local levels in ways that would be healthy and productive for those units as well as the University as a whole. He stated that he recently had received a copy of the proposed Bylaws developed by the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering and anticipated asking University legal counsel to review the

proposal. In response to questions and ensuing discussion, he indicated that the Board of Trustees' creation of the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering had given impetus to the present inquiry concerning whether there is room to have enhanced autonomy in areas of governance more generally throughout the University.

President Ryan indicated that new administrative challenges would certainly be presented with increasing local autonomy in areas such as research. He suggested that the committee would benefit by conferring with Interim Provost Mumpower and representatives from other institutions, such as SUNY-Stony Brook, to consider their insights and perspectives. He stated that he would be willing to locate resources that might be necessary to bring in visitors for such purposes.

Drawing on prior experience, President Ryan reflected that precipitating events frequently require organizations to change in reaction, and that such events can produce positive changes when otherwise maintenance of the status quo would have been likely. He indicated that different degrees of autonomy in different areas almost certainly would be appropriate, and would likely be consistent with the retention of key governance committees. He reiterated that the committee would likely find it useful to invite representatives of other institutions to its meetings, as well as to invite the perspectives of others at UAlbany.

Following President Ryan's departure, the committee resumed discussion of issues including the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering's progress in drafting proposed bylaws. Professor Geer indicated that those bylaws were not presently ready for public distribution, but that he would be happy to bring them to the attention of interested committee members when they are ready for release.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that the committee would next meet on Aug. 11 and that subcommittees would meet in the interim. The subcommittees are to continue their business of identifying the important issues

to be addressed, collecting information from other institutions about those issues, identifying alternative governance models with respect to those issues, and then making preliminary recommendations with rationale. It generally was agreed that a system should be created for contacting individuals at other institutions, to avoid duplication of effort and to avoid unduly burdening the representatives of other universities.

The three subcommittees met for brief discussion following the meeting's conclusion.