

Ad hoc University-wide Governance Committee
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Committee

July 7, 2004

Minutes

Present: J. Acker, J. Altarriba (substituting for L. Schell), R. Bangert-Drowns,
J. Bartow, B. Carlson, P. Eppard, M. Fogelman, R. Geer, T. Hoff, J. Pipkin, G. Singh, B. Via, J. Wyckoff

Minutes: The minutes of June 30, 2004 were approved.

Subcommittees: Assignments were made to the following subcommittees:

Subcommittee on Research Programs: Jon Bartow, Bonnie Carlson, Tim Hoff, Larry Schell, Jim Wyckoff

Subcommittee on Graduate Academic Curriculum and Graduate Academic Standing: Bob Bangert-Drowns, Bob Geer, John Pipkin, Gurinder Singh

Subcommittee on Promotions and Continuing Appointments: Jim Acker, Phil Eppard, Marty Fogelman, Barbara Via

Although details have yet to be discussed, it was suggested that the subcommittees should meet and attempt to (1) identify important issues to be addressed, (2) gather information relevant to those issues, including information from peer institutions, and (3) draft recommendations for discussion among the entire committee. Subcommittees will begin their work following the July 14 committee meeting, or sooner if members prefer.

Discussion of Issues Relating to Committee's Charge Regarding Graduate Curriculum and Graduate Academic Standing

Copies were distributed of University regulations governing exceptions to various rules and governing academic grievance procedures.

Initial discussion considered both the benefits (including "value added") and costs (including inefficiencies and time investments) of centralized faculty governance review of matters relating to graduate curriculum. At issue was a comparative assessment of the presumed benefits and the presumed costs.

Considerable effort is invested in curriculum matters. It is important to consider where that effort takes place, how much time is spent, relative expertise, and the measure of deference traditionally exhibited to individual units by the Graduate Academic Council (GAC).

It was suggested that although the GAC is loath to substitute its judgment about the academic value of programmatic and major curriculum proposals for the judgment of the faculty most directly involved, potential benefits inherent in GAC review. Those potential benefits include: (1) ensuring that units give appropriate reflection and care to programmatic initiatives, which presumably is encouraged in part by the anticipated GAC review; (2) acting as a mediator when a proposal from one unit has implications for another; (3) the perspectives that faculty not directly involved in a proposal might bring when reviewing proposals; (4) helping guard against overlap and duplication among programs; (5) helping ensure a strong faculty role on curriculum and resource issues vis a vis administration.

Potential costs of centralized review include: (1) time inefficiencies and delay; (2) particular problems during summer months when Senate councils are not meeting; (3) investment of faculty time; (4) lack of expertise regarding issues arising from individual units. It was pointed out that for major issues, including creation and dissolution of programs and changes in degree requirements, additional review beyond faculty governance (e.g., at SUNY Central, the State Dept. of Education) already is required.

Questions were raised about whether time investments were an appropriate measure of "efficiency," and if they were whether time spent was offset by other measures such as helping ensure quality, consultation, and preserving a strong faculty voice. It also was pointed out that if time is taken as a measure of efficiency, to decentralize functions such as those performed by GAC might lead to several "mini-GAC's" within academic units, resulting in the investment of more personnel and additional hours of work. It was suggested that curricular matters are among the most important defining aspects of a University, and that balkanization of the curriculum could have costs in terms of symbolic unity and

shared interests.

It was suggested that there is an important role to be played in many issues related to curriculum by a second level review conducted by a body outside of the academic unit in which the issue originated, i.e., a reviewing body that is not " beholden " to the Dean of the home academic unit. In this vein, it was suggested that there might be benefits in considering a model resembling that used at SUNY Stony Brook, which relies on smaller "academic clusters" comprised of faculty within somewhat similar units.

The role of the former EPC, now UPPC, in reviewing resource implications regarding major curricular issues was discussed, in addition to GAC's role in reviewing academic matters.

Discussion turned to assessment issues relevant to graduate programs and curricula. Consensus appeared to emerge that it would be difficult to conduct assessment appropriately if necessary functions were decentralized.

Discussion then turned to issues of graduate academic standing and academic grievances. Grievances deal largely with issues involving grades and evaluation of other academic work, while academic standing issues concern various university requirements such as a minimally acceptable grade point average and statutes of limitations.

It was suggested that there is considerable value—both perceived and actual—in allowing students the right to have access to a body not connected with their home academic unit to pass judgment on grievance issues. Discussion included the possibility of developing a University-wide grievance or judicial committee designed to resolve grievance issues, or of creating a University ombudsperson to help mediate or resolve grievance issues.