Ad hoc University-wide Governance CommitteeAd hoc University-wide Governance
Committee

June 23, 2004

Minutes*

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

Guests: Associate Professor Louise-Anne McNutt, incoming Chair
of the
Graduate Academic Council
                         Professor Glenna Spitze, outgoing Chair of the
Council
on Promotions and
Continuing Appointments

Discussion of agendas for future meetings:

§   Professor Acker reported that the earliest President Ryan might
be
available to meet with the committee is July 14th.

§   Professor Acker outlined a general plan for conducting business
at
future meetings. He suggested that the committee begin next week by
discussing
issues that may have begun to take shape by that time. Then, a plan
might be
designed to identify peer institutions, who should be contacted at those
institutions, and questions to be posed to collect information about
governance
models followed elsewhere. Following additional discussion, the
committee might
begin to draft preliminary recommendations relevant to the committee
charge.
After the academic year begins, those recommendations could be discussed
more
broadly with constituents for their input and reactions. Then, the
committee
could reconvene and attempt to draft a set of final recommendations prior
to
Oct. 1. Professor Acker indicated that he would welcome suggestions and
comments about structuring future meetings and planning their agendas.

Discussion with Professor Louise-Anne McNutt, School of Public Health,
incoming
chair of the Graduate Academic Council (GAC):

GAC is responsible for the conduct of the University's graduate educational program. GAC reviews proposals for initiation of new programs, reviews ongoing programs and may recommend suspending or discontinuing a program. GAC rarely overrules schools' or colleges' decisions, although it does send proposals back for clarification if necessary. Major changes to existing programs go to GAC for review, GAC makes recommendations to the University Senate and then they go to UAlbany Administration for consideration and to SUNY Administration for consideration and final approval. Professor McNutt suggested that decentralizing governance in the area of graduate academic educational programs could create potential overlap or redundancies among school or departmental offerings if there is no review at the university level. A suggestion was made that the review of individual courses for programmatic overlap and redundancies presently is somewhat haphazard. An alternative view was offered that review may not be haphazard but rather issue-driven, and that the focus should be less on the outcome of decisions and more regarding the value of helping ensure that representatives of different units are communicating with one another.

Student grievances are a very important part of the charge of GAC. In particular, allowing an opportunity for review of grievances that is removed from the school or department can be essential. If there is decentralization, students may not have such an opportunity to have grievances reviewed by a body external to their school or college. Some grievances implicate graduate students' academic standing and GAC is charged with reviewing such matters.

Professor McNutt suggested that changing the existing governance structure to allow for increased autonomy on issues presently routed through GAC could (for better or for worse) result in a substantial shift of power from faculty to the administration and to deans of the school/colleges.

Discussion with Professor Glenna Spitze, Department of Sociology, outgoing chair of the Council on Promotions and Continuing Appointments (CPCA)*:

Professor Spitze explained that the CPCA considers tenure and promotion cases
from the entire University, and typically reviews approximately 30 cases a year.
 The CPCA consists of approximately 10 to 12 faculty members from across the
campus, one professional, and a student representative. Faculty are chosen to
ensure that membership is balanced across disciplines. CPCA considers the
research, teaching and service performance of faculty members who are reviewed.
All CPCA members read the files prepared for all faculty whose cases come before
the Council. After reviewing the file and supplemental material such as
publications, one Council member presents the case to the others by summarizing
the contents of the file. Each Council member then is invited to offer his or
her views about the case. A general discussion and a vote (by written ballot)
then follow. The Council makes a recommendation to the Provost, and the Provost
in turn makes a recommendation to the President regarding the case.

Some colleges and schools have a body that performs a second-level review of a
tenure or promotion case before the case goes to CPCA, while others do not. A
question was raised about whether CPCA guidelines require CPCA to be involved in
cases arising from units that already have conducted a second level of review.
It was suggested that Bill Hedberg might be contacted to help resolve this
issue. Professor Spitze opined that whether or not there is a second level
review at the school/college level, there is no difference in how cases are
reviewed by CPCA. The CPCA occasionally does find items missing from the files,
even in the cases where there was a second level review at the school/college
level.

Professor Spitze suggested that CPCA is important to help ensure that cases are
treated consistently across the campus, and to help insulate cases from being
unduly influenced by local pressures. Further, CPCA provides consistent and
useful advice to the Provost, and the Provost or a representative attend the

meetings and benefit by the context provided by a full discussion of a case.
Although the Council's vote is important, the underlying discussion can also be
very important to the Provost. Professor Spitze feels that the existence of the
Council is important for the campus culture in that other academic units know
that there is a single body reviewing all cases and that they are being handled
consistently. If CPCA is discontinued, recommendations would go from the
schools/departments directly to Provost and the Provost would not necessarily
have the benefit of a full report of the group discussion. Although the
schools/departments do provide their own recommendations with accompanying
documentation, the Council members occasionally find some information missing
and also review the procedures followed at prior levels of review. One
committee member suggested that unless a single centralized reviewing body such
as CPCA exists, different units might gradually adopt different incentive
structures regarding faculty performance in the dimensions of teaching,
research, and service.

Minutes: The minutes of June 16, 2004 were approved with amendments.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jayne VanDenburgh, Recorder

*Please see the Minutes of the September 17, 2004 Ad hoc University-wide
Governance Committee Meeting to review changes later made to the minutes of June
23.