

**From:** Phillips, Susan D  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 18, 2010 6:22 PM  
**To:** Fessler, Susanna; Lifshin, Eric  
**Cc:** Delio, Vincent J; Presmail; Datri, Angela C; Bessette, Tom; Fossett, James  
**Subject:** Questions about the next consultative process

To recap, I met with the Governance Council on Friday, December 10, to begin a conversation about input into the design of the next consultative process. This conversation began with an invitation to consider—knowing what we know now—what kind of consultation group and/or process might be desired. As you know, we have some specifications in that regard in the University Senate Bylaws and Charter, and while GOV recently concluded that the round of consultation that we are currently concluding was in compliance with those provisions, I understand that others may have a different view. This divergence of opinions prompts me to solicit input for the President prior to his consideration of next steps in dealing with the budget reductions.

I mentioned to Susanna at the GOV meeting that I would follow up with a note about some of the issues that we had touched on; that list is below. I understand that GOV will be considering these (and others that will surely arise in the course of the deliberations) and that Susanna will send me some form of response from GOV, likely after the holidays. Eric, I understand that you may also be envisioning a role for the larger Senate in defining consultation and the process by which it occurs. I am not sure what role you have in mind, but have copied here Jim and Tom to include them in the discussion.

I begin this summary of issues with an important caveat that, of course, we never know what the new budget will bring, nor when the news will arrive. However, we do already have some glimpses that we will face a reduction scenario that will further strain our resources (beyond that for which we have already undertaken planning).

Some of the issues to consider in designing a consultative process/group to consider the next steps:

Timeline: For the coming set of decisions that will likely need to be made, I would expect that we would want to have completed the consultation process by early/mid April at the very latest. Depending on how much background and learning is needed for the consultative body, I would imagine that for a process to END at that point, it would need to have begun in early February. (This, in turn, would dictate a selection and recruitment and scheduling process as soon after the holidays as possible.)

Designation of the consultative body: This is currently a responsibility assigned either to the Governance Council (to appoint or approve the appointment of at least 50% of a consultative body outside of the formal senate councils and committees), or to a standing Senate Council or Committee. What would be the desired way of determining whether to use an standing Council or a newly constituted group? In addition, using an existing Senate council or committee (such as UPPC, for the budget context) as the consultative body has raised questions about representativeness (as the composition of that body has does not rely on representativeness—see notes on this issue below). From a different perspective, if there is a separate consultative body, what then would be the appropriate role of the standing Council (again, in this example, the UPPC) in the larger process? In addition, the current Bylaws call for a designation of individuals for “reporting back.” Who designates specific members to report back? To whom do designated members report, in what venue, and with what level of detail? Who insures that the “reporting back” happens?

Scope of the consultative body: What is the right size and scope? A consultative body needs to be large enough to capture important view points, and yet small enough to afford opportunities for learning, participation and deliberation. There has also been some question about the right mix of university participants—students, clerical staff, professional staff, people in management/confidential titles, and academic faculty. From another perspective, there has been concern raised that those who might be willing to service on a consultative body at this point might be only those who “have an axe to grind.”

Representativeness of the consultative body: How can/should “representativeness” be defined? Could people represent broad areas/viewpoints? Should individuals be drawn from broad areas, but not be considered formally “their representative?” One person to represent each program/department/office/area/school/college/division (size constraints enter here!)? Should there be both “academic” and “professional” staff represented for all consultative bodies? What about for those bodies making recommendations directly affecting the academic curriculum?

Education: For a consultative body to be effective, there is certainly a period of education and learning that needs to take place. Provisions need to be made for such learning opportunities, and there may be desirability in drawing on at least some of those who have already engaged in the educative process on the current set of issues at hand.

Approach to the task: Some have advocated for a “build the university from the ground up” approach to the recommendations about budget reductions—taking as a starting point a zero base, and building a sustainable university of the future by adding in components according to strategic vision (whether or not they currently exist) until the available funds are expended. Others have advocated for an approach that evaluates and sustains strengths already in place. And there may be yet other approaches to the question of being a University with fewer resources! (I would hasten to note that the President will surely define his consultative question—and that may dictate the approach to the task.)

Transparency and the public/private nature of deliberations: How public should the consultative deliberations be? Any decision in this regard has broad-reaching ramifications: For instance the strategy to maintain privacy has the benefit of not creating disruption until toward the end of the process (hence, only those finally “at risk” are disrupted). However, such a strategy can also be seen as secretive and exclusive. At the other end of the spectrum, a fully public set of deliberations—while satisfying the “transparency” criterion—can cause broader disruption than ultimately might be necessary.

Making decisions about colleagues: Per union provisions and also individual convictions, academic faculty and professional faculty need to not be in a position where they are making decisions about their colleagues. This presents something of a tension, in that faculty need to be both central to the decision making, and yet also not active decision makers. Furthermore, it is likely not possible in the present context to make recommendations about “program actions” that don’t also have implications for personnel.

Demarcation point: Where should be the demarcation point between consultation and decision making? At what point does the consultation process end, and decision making begin?

Post-decision review/approval: If there is a process that “hands off” to decision makers at some specified demarcation point, should there be a post-decision review and/or approval? From a different

perspective, a process in which the consultative or review/approval process simply says “no” to a proposed course of action, without proposing an alternate course of action, is probably not tenable.

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