

University Council Update

Cynthia Fox, Vice Chair of University Senate

These are the major issues the Governance Council has taken since the last meeting of the University Council.

1. Formal Consultation:

a. The Governance Council has responded to several requests to provide consultation on Committees formed outside of Governance as outlined in the Senate Bylaws Article I Section 2.5:

--from Diana Mancini, Co-Chair of the President's Advisory Committee on Campus Safety (ACCS), that we recommend a list of six teaching faculty from which three will be invited to serve a one-year term;

--from Bill Hedberg, Associate Vice President and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, that we approve the roster of members to each of the Excellence Awards Committees and recommend a Senate delegate and alternative to be included;

--from Tim Mulcahy, Interim Provost, initially to suggest possible representatives for inclusion on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Adjunct/Contingent Faculty and to forward areas, issues or challenges the Council believes should be included in the panel's charge; later to approve the roster which was put forward subsequent to this input as well as that of other relevant campus constituencies. Our understanding is that Provost Stellar will be moving forward with this important initiative.

-- from Tim Mulcahy, Interim Provost, initially to suggest possible representatives for inclusion on a Blue Ribbon Panel on Graduate Student Compensation and to forward areas, issues or challenges the Council believes should be included in the panel's charge; later to approve the roster which was put forward subsequent to this input as well as that of other relevant campus constituencies. Our understanding is that Provost Stellar will be moving forward with this important initiative.

b. The Council has also sent a request to Michael Shimazu, Associate Vice President of Business Partnerships and Development, for clarification as to the composition of the Start-Up New York Campus Advisory Committee and of the Ad Hoc Academic Review Committee that are described in the University Start-Up NY Plan since Governance was not consulted in their constitution. Interim Provost Mulcahy indicated at a recent meeting of the Senate Executive Committee that he had forwarded recommendations to President Jones that would address this oversight. Governance will be looking to follow up on this important matter with Provost Stellar.

c. Senate Chair Stefl-Mabry and I were pleased to be invited to participate in stakeholder meetings with the four finalists for the position of Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost in December, and that the entire campus community was able to read their letters of application and CV, attend their public presentation, and provide feedback.

2. Assessment of Effectiveness of Governance and Consultation

a. Survey of Governance and Consultation

Senate Chair Joette Stefl-Mabry and I presented the results of *spring 2014 University at Albany Faculty and Professional Staff Survey on Shared Governance* and of the *spring 2014 University at Albany Student Survey on Shared Governance* at the October 20th meeting of the University Senate.

The surveys are intended to evaluate the effectiveness of governance in representing its constituencies, in addressing issues and concerns, and in affecting institutional decisions. A Charter amendment that requires that the survey be administered on a two-year cycle was also passed at that meeting.

The combined results of the survey were disheartening in that they suggest that the university community is generally uninformed about governance. Although sampling issues make it difficult to take percentages, comments, or themes that emerged as representative, the survey gave voice to a perception among the faculty who responded that the Senate works in the service of the administration, “rubber-stamping” administrative initiatives and providing the necessary façade of faculty consultation and participation.

Despite its problems, the Council believes that this study is a “revelatory case,” what Yin (1984, p. 43) describes as an opportunity to observe and analyze an understudied phenomenon: how university constituents perceive the effectiveness of university governance bodies.

Two standing committees of the Governance Council: the Committee on Liaison and Elections and the Committee on Assessment of Governance and Consultation will be working on improving the survey instrument and addressing the issues raised.

Members of the University Council are invited to look at the full reports which are available on the Senate website:

http://www.albany.edu/senate/governance_council_assessment.htm

3. Actions on Bills, Amendments and Referendums

On Friday, November 14, President Jones sent a memo the Senate leadership recommending that the Senate Bylaws and Charter be amended to revoke voting privileges from administrators who

serve as ex-officio members as well as those who serve on committees and councils in an administrative capacity.

The recommendation addresses an aspect of our current Bylaws and Charter that is atypical in campus governance structures. Given that the actions and recommendations of the Senate and its Councils and Committees are advisory to the President, and hence to the relevant administrative unit, the recommended amendment will allow this advice to better reflect the voice of the Faculty and other members of the Senate separately from any administrative voice.

The Governance Council has drafted the Bylaws amendment, passage of which requires approval from 2/3 of the Voting Faculty, 30% of whom must vote in order to achieve quorum. The vote will take place on-line during Senate elections in late March. The Governance Council is now working on a similar amendment to the Charter. These only require a vote by the Senate, and will likely not be put forward unless the Bylaws amendment passes.

The President's memo is available on the Senate website:

http://www.albany.edu/avail/files/2014_1114_Pres_RJJ_Memo_to_Senate_Re_Proposed_Amendmt.pdf.

The Governance Council joins Senate Chair Stefl-Mabry in thanking the President for his support and insightful leadership in working to create a relationship of mutual trust that promotes and sustains thoughtful deliberation and decision-making.

February 17, 2015