

University Faculty Meeting

February 21, 2025

Agenda:

1. Initial reading and discussion of Faculty Governance Reform proposal documents
[provided via email on February 14, 2025] (Alan Green and Steven Smallpage)

The meeting was called to order at 12:00pm by Provost Skomp.

Provost Elizabeth Skomp opened the special faculty meeting by noting its unique focus and sole agenda item: the initial reading and discussion of faculty governance reform proposal documents. She then yielded the floor to Alan Green, the primary presenter, who was later joined by Steven Smallpage.

Initial reading and discussion of Faculty Governance Reform proposal documents

Alan Green presented an overview of proposed changes to faculty governance and committee structures, highlighting reforms that have been in discussion since 2014. The proposed changes aim to simplify processes for populating committees and update curricular and reporting structures. The proposal also recommends eliminating the Committee on Committees and conducting elections for all committee roles.

The proposed University Curriculum Committee is intended to simplify approval workflows by allowing colleges to manage minor course changes and reducing redundancies. Academic policy proposals would be reviewed by the Faculty Senate. Proposed bylaw changes would clarify the process for updating committee descriptions, charges, and memberships, creating a more flexible system for future revisions. Dr. Green responded to questions about the current role of the Faculty Senate in reviewing and recommending academic policies for approval and establishing mechanisms for faculty to request that specific policy proposals be brought to the full faculty for a vote.

The conversation included clarification that committee roles and responsibilities are not fixed but can be adapted. Committees such as IRB (Institutional Review Board) will continue their regular operations without an additional level of review. In response to a question about the procedures for populating committees and task forces, Dr. Green responded that the Senate Governance Committee will propose procedures for elections.

Subsequent topics of discussion included how to prevent the election process for committees from favoring well-known individuals over those who might be better suited to serve, and a request for clarification of the process for annual reporting from committees and who would provide feedback. The response clarified that reports would be submitted to the Faculty Senate and eventually to the Provost. Feedback could be sought from the Senate Governance Committee, though individual communication with the Provost remains an option.

The conversation then shifted to the challenges of distributing service responsibilities, ensuring that interested junior faculty have opportunities to serve. One participant noted that some faculty might be overwhelmed with service commitments, which could create barriers to recruiting

committee members. In addition, the possibility of term limits for committee members was discussed briefly. A concern was expressed about the potential loss of expertise in critical committees, particularly the University Committee on Curriculum and Academic Policy (UCCAP) due to a reduction in committee size. One participant suggested that the proposed changes might diminish the committee's ability to address emerging issues related to Hatter Ready and other initiatives.

Presenters explained that the new University Curriculum Committee would still include representatives from College and School curriculum committees, ensuring that expertise is retained while streamlining the decision-making process. Any significant issues related to curricular changes would be addressed through open communication with other university departments, such as the Office of the Registrar.

Finally, the conversation turned to the broader implications of these changes for the university's faculty culture. The proposed changes are intended reduce redundancies and maximize efficiency and accountability.

In her closing comments, Provost Elizabeth Skomp thanked Dr. Green and others involved in the presentation. While acknowledging that a shift to elected, not appointed, committee roles will require the development of a robust nomination process to create a slate of candidates, Provost Skomp emphasized that it would be a positive step forward for the university. She also noted the need for further discussions and commentary, as well as an avenue for faculty to contribute questions and comments.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.