

Faculty Executive Committee (FEC)  
Annual Report 2006-2007

1. ROUTINE BUSINESS

As part of its regular duties this year, the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) met 25 times in regular sessions during the academic year 2006-2007. In addition, FEC convened two meetings of the Committee of Committees (COC) and one Faculty Caucus (i.e., faculty-only meeting). FEC ran elections and sought sabbatical replacements for standing faculty committees, and coordinated willingness-to-serve nominations for faculty to serve on various ad hoc groups. FEC continued to serve as observers at the Board of Trustees meetings. FEC worked with other faculty committees and with members of the administration on changes to the *Faculty Handbook*. Finally, FEC further revised its operating code.

Some remarks on routine business:

A. *Committee of Committees*. Some faculty expressed their surprise to FEC that Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Susan Kress responded in writing to the minutes of the fall COC meeting, and on the floor of the faculty after the COC report was read at the May meeting. It has always been FEC's position that shared governance requires a dialectic structure, whatever the form of the dialogue itself. Furthermore, given that administrators are currently not invited to COC meetings, misunderstandings and miscommunications are possible; FEC would be remiss in its duty not to afford administrators the opportunity, should they wish to take it, to offer responses and issue corrections.

In her response to the December COC minutes, the VPAA proposed an additional meeting between administrators and appropriate committee chairs to discuss and assess mutual work and make recommendations for improvement. FEC is open to considering such a structure, which would offer a more direct and expedient system of reporting than currently exists. Nevertheless, FEC believes that the faculty should retain its provisions for meeting to speak candidly among itself. Toward this end, it seems likely that the practice of convening the COC will continue.

In his report of COC meetings, delivered at the May 16, 2007, Faculty Meeting, the Chair of FEC, Dan Curley, described a dispute between CAFR and Human Resources over the release of a document deemed by CAFR to be pertinent to one of its investigations. The Chair of FEC said:

“The dispute was subsequently resolved at a meeting between CAFR, the President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Director of Human Resources; concerning this meeting CAFR reported that it has

accepted the [a]dministration's rationale for keeping the document sealed."

This statement caused some confusion and anger for several faculty members, including the Chair of CAFR, who asked the Chair of FEC via email for clarification. One source of the confusion was the (admittedly but not deliberately) misleading phrase, "accepted the Administration's rationale." The phrase was intended to mean only that CAFR understood the rationale behind the decision to withhold the document; it was *not* intended to mean that CAFR accepted or otherwise approved of the decision itself. Another source of confusion was the word "resolved," which suggested to some that the matter had been not only concluded, but also concluded to mutual satisfaction.

The Chair of FEC regrets and apologizes for any misunderstandings that have arisen from his statement. (For CAFR's own response to the dispute, please see that committee's 2006-2007 Annual Report.)

*B. Faculty Caucus.* The Vice-President for Academic Affairs had asked that she and the Dean of the Faculty be invited to the Faculty Caucus in March; the Caucus was called by FEC on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR) to discuss CAFR's proposal to change Part One, Article X of the *Faculty Handbook* ("Discipline of Tenured Faculty"). While the attendance of administrators is provided for in the FEC operating code, in this instance, however, FEC ultimately decided that the interests of the faculty were better served at that moment by calling a faculty-only meeting — a decision made neither easily nor capriciously. FEC did read an email by the VPAA at the meeting, and the VPAA herself offered comments on CAFR's proposal at the March 30, 2007, Faculty Meeting.

*C. Elections to Standing Committees.* This year was one of the most difficult in recent memory for finding colleagues willing to serve on standing committees of the faculty. Elections were delayed as FEC struggled to assemble robust ballots, and in many cases there were just enough faculty to cover all of the available slots. Rounds Three and Four were particularly fraught. In the former, for example, the Curriculum Committee (CC) had two open slots, but only one faculty member listed on the ballot — the result being that CC will begin AY 2007-2008 short-staffed.

*D. Amendments to the Faculty Handbook.* In close consultation with FEC, Athletic Council (AC) revised its *Handbook* statements on function and membership (Part Two, Article II, Section F, Item 12); the revisions will be presented at the September 2007 Faculty Meeting.

The Committee on Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure (CAPT) consulted with FEC on language concerning the roles of the VPAA, the DOF and the President in tenure and promotion cases (Part One, Article IX, Section E,

number 6 and Article XI, Section A, number 1, letter a). FEC presented this language on CAPT's behalf at the October 2006 Faculty Meeting, with a waiver of the 30-day layover period moved and approved. The motion to amend the *Handbook* carried, and the Board of Trustees ultimately approved the new language at its meeting of February 22, 2007.

CAFR sought advice from FEC on its proposal for Part One, Article X of the *Handbook*; and FEC participated in a special summer working group on Part Six; on all of this work please see number 2, below.

## 2. FACULTY HANDBOOK ISSUES

FEC offered comments on CAFR's proposal to change Part One, Article X of the *Faculty Handbook* ("Discipline of Tenured Faculty"). At the same time, FEC agreed with the VPAA and the DOF that the changes dovetailed with language regarding anti-harassment policies and procedures being developed by Human Resources (HR) and the administration for Part Six. Ultimately, neither Part of the *Handbook* was officially amended for during the 2006-2007 AY.

With regard to the *Handbook* itself, the process of formally presenting the document to the faculty has unraveled in the past few years. From 1997-2003, the Chair of CFG moved the adoption of the *Handbook* at the first or second (and usually the first) Faculty Meeting of the year. At the start of AY 2004, however, CFG moved the adoption of Parts One through Five only, with Part Six carrying over from the 2003-2004 edition. In AY 2005-2006, the first year of FEC's existence, the Committee moved the adoption of *Handbook* Parts One through Five (with the old Part Six again carried over) in November. The delay that year was due to revisions to Part Five, which needed to reflect recent changes to the Administration, including the separation of the DOF and VPAA, and the restructuring of the Offices of the Dean of Studies (DOS) and Dean of Student Affairs (DOSA).

In AY 2006-2007, FEC moved the adoption of Parts One through Five in December (approved in February), and the adoption of a revised Part Six in February (to be approved in March). The latter motion was withdrawn at the March 30, 2007, Faculty Meeting in the wake of comments from CAFR, the Intercultural and Global Understanding Task Force, and students — all of whom indicated that Part Six was not yet ready to be approved. With Parts One through Five approved so late in the AY, and without a viable Part Six, FEC decided not to rush the 2006-2007 *Handbook* into print — especially if it would soon be superseded by the 2007-2008 edition (see below). Although the thought of not having an updated edition in print might well give pause, FEC would like to remind the faculty that no edition of the *Faculty Handbook* can ever be complete, because the faculty's business is ongoing. In particular, Parts One and Two of the *Handbook* are simply records of transactions conducted on the floor of Faculty Meetings and in committees.

That said, FEC remains reasonably confident about moving an updated *Handbook*, with a revised Part Six, for adoption in the near future. This summer the Chair of FEC joined the Chairs of CAPT and CAFR in meeting with the VPAA, the DOF, the Director of HR, the Assistant Director for Equal Employment Opportunity and Workforce Diversity, and the Executive Director of the President's Office to discuss revisions to Part Six. Although the work of this group, as of this writing, remains incomplete, and although the current draft has yet to be reviewed by all members of FEC, CAPT, and CAFR (among others), FEC hopes that the completed 2007-2008 *Faculty Handbook* will be ready for presentation by the October meeting.

Finally, a few words on the fate of the *Faculty Handbook*. The administration as well as committees such as FEC and CAPT have noted pervasive inconsistencies in the *Handbook*, which are largely due to the piecemeal manner in which the document is written and revised. A large-scale revision of the *Handbook* seems likely in the near future, not only to spell out what is currently vague, but also to bring consistency to the document *in toto*. FEC would like to restate that, like CFG before it, our committee has traditionally kept the *Handbook*, and intends to continue serving as the primary conduit through which changes to the document are channeled. At the same time, FEC recognizes that the *Handbook* is ultimately the work of many different constituencies, from the faculty, to members of the administration, to the Student Government Association (SGA), and even (in some cases) to the Trustees. FEC has not yet had a formal discussion among itself, let alone with any other group, about what the specific procedures should be for large-scale revisions. One possible scenario, on the model of the summer working group that has revised Part Six, might be a kernel of FEC augmented by chairs of other necessary committees and by members of the administration, and joined, where appropriate, by members of SGA. In any event, FEC believes that substantial faculty input on this enterprise will be crucial to its success, and hopes that the faculty agrees.

### 3. SERVICE PROJECT

Concerned about the proliferation of *ad hoc* committees, and about the difficulties in running robust elections for our standing committees, FEC has laid the foundation for its so-called "Service Project," which will hopefully shed light on the vagaries of faculty service at Skidmore. In articulating its goals, FEC has worked closely with the VPAA and the DOF, and hopes to continue this partnership. If the DOF agrees, FEC will present its project at a fall meeting of Chairs and Program Directors.

### 4. FEC-ELIGIBILITY

In the spring FEC had discussions among itself and with the VPAA regarding the eligibility of faculty administrators — chiefly those recruited from the faculty for directorships and deanships — to run for standing committees, to vote in elections for those committees, and to attend faculty-only meetings. No consensus was reached on this issue, though some members of FEC thought that the potential exists for faculty administrators to be placed in untenable positions at (say) faculty-only meetings.

## 5. DOS/DOSA SPLIT AND STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES

The Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) struck a subcommittee with representation by FEC to study and report on the restructuring of the Offices of the DOS and the DOSA (including the creation of the Office of Student Academic Services). The subcommittee met once toward the end of spring semester and will resume its work in the fall of 2007.

## 6. COURSE RELEASE TASK FORCE

The Course Release Task Force, struck by FEC and the Dean of the Faculty (DOF) and with FEC representation, completed its work and released its report to the DOF and the faculty at large.

The Chair thanks this year's FEC members for their frank and helpful deliberations on important and sometimes thorny governance issues. Thanks also to Sue Blair and Mary Ellen Kokoletsos for efficient and friendly administrative assistance.

Respectfully submitted,



Dan Curley

## FEC 2006-2007 MEMBERSHIP:

Lisa Aronson, Art and Art History  
Tim Burns, Government  
Dan Curley, Classics, Chair  
Jennifer Delton, History  
Mark Huibregtse, Math and Computer Science, IPPC Vice-chair  
Dan Hurwitz, Math and Computer Science  
Bill Lewis, Philosophy, IPPC representative  
Mehmet Odekon, Economics, IPPC representative  
Paty Rubio, Foreign Languages and Literatures

## FEC 2007-2008 MEMBERSHIP

Lisa Aronson, Art and Art History (on leave fall 2007)  
Sue Bender, Anthropology, Sociology, and Social Work, IPPC representative  
John Brueggemann, Anthropology, Sociology, and Social Work  
Dan Curley, Classics, Chair  
Jennifer Delton, History (on leave 2007-2008)

Mark Huibregtse, Math and Computer Science, IPPC Vice-chair  
Mehmet Odekon, Economics, IPPC representative  
Viviana Rangil, Foreign Languages and Literatures  
Paty Rubio, Foreign Languages and Literatures  
Mason Stokes, English