

ANNUAL REPORT

Faculty Executive Committee

June 8, 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty Executive Committee met 28 times during the academic year of 2008-2009. The Chair participated in new faculty orientation programs in September and April and contributed to conversations about governance with Academic Staff, IPPC, and the Board of Trustees. FEC had a conversation with six former members of CAPT about how service and governance are valued and evaluated at the College. The committee also met with the VPAA to discuss service and a range of other topics. We also had additional substantive email correspondence with the VPAA, the DOF, Academic Staff, and Chairs of all major committees at the College.

FACULTY HANDBOOK

FEC brought to the floor of September 5 Faculty Meeting a substantially revised *Faculty Handbook*, the result of several important motions approved the previous year, including the new Part VI, which the faculty formally adopted. During that process, a substantive conversation unfolded about how to facilitate access to the *Faculty Handbook*. There is widespread support for moving in the direction of expanded electronic access but also recognition that certain parties will necessarily need a hardcopy each time a new version is produced. Since a complete new *Faculty Handbook* had not been printed in several years, FEC determined that all faculty members should receive a hardcopy of the 2008-2009 version. We agreed to revisit this issue next year.

ELECTIONS

FEC oversaw five rounds of the Willingness to Serve process, which include the usual two per semester plus one in the summer of 2008. We were successful in ultimately filling most committee spots, though often in elections with no more candidates than there were spots. After Round IV, four spots remained vacant (IPPC replacement for Fall 09, IRC three-year term beginning Fall 09, Safety in the Workplace three-year term beginning Fall 09, Safety in the Workplace replacement for Spring 10).

COMMITTEE OF COMMITTEES

As stipulated by the *Faculty Handbook*, FEC convened the Committee of Committees one time each semester. The conversations in those gatherings reflected productive working relationships among committees and between committees on which faculty serve and the administration. Attendees of these meetings did raise concerns about how the overall system of governance is functioning, which is addressed below. At the spring meeting, colleagues also expressed concern about the poor attendance of faculty at Faculty Meetings.

BOT OBSERVATIONS

FEC observed the regular meetings of the Board of Trustees in October and in March. We are pondering whether this work, which has heretofore served a very important function in college governance, is still serving its intended purpose. In addition to all the pressing work the faculty carries out in service of the institution and the related need to enhance efficiency whenever possible, there are two factors that motivate this question. First, the Board has increasingly held meetings in executive session in which members of the faculty are generally not permitted. Second, staff in the President's office already take detailed minutes of the sessions to which we are privy. We plan to continue discussing this matter next year.

UWW

FEC spent considerable time this year monitoring the process through which consideration of closing UWW took place. We weighed in substantively about questions of governance at several different points during this process. That input and our sense of the overall process is detailed below in Appendix A.

SERVICE AND GOVERNANCE

The other important issue FEC considered this year is how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the faculty's work in service and governance in general. During this inquiry, which extended from efforts of the committee during 2007-2008, we pondered a range of perennial questions and current challenges. The culmination of our effort this year is a report on the committee system, which we presented on the floor of the April 3 Faculty Meeting. This report, which is included below as Appendix B, will guide FEC's ongoing consideration of this problem next year.

IPPC/FEC-6/FEC-9

One of the main challenges we have identified in the current operation of our governance system is getting enough faculty who are willing to serve on important committees. A focal point of this concern is IPPC, which includes 19 individuals, and, along with its subcommittees, over 70 committee spots. There is some sense that IPPC also has an awkward structure since the central deliberative body of the institution sometimes makes recommendations, directly or indirectly, to the same person who chairs it, the President. The *Faculty Handbook* dictates that three faculty members are elected to serve on the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee. Six other faculty members are elected to serve on the Faculty Executive Committee and constitute "FEC-6." The three IPPC representatives are, according to the *Faculty Handbook*, also members of the Faculty Executive Committee and, along with members of FEC-6, constitute "FEC-9." In the past, FEC-6 has met every other week at the same time as IPPC, and FEC-9 has met in between those meetings. Sharing information between FEC-6 and the IPPC representatives became tedious. Given how cumbersome the work of faculty on IPPC, FEC-6 and FEC-9 was year before last, the Faculty Executive Committee agreed early on this past to pilot a different arrangement. FEC-6 met weekly. FEC-9 met twice each semester. In addition, ongoing conversations about a range of issues involving FEC-9 took place on email. We have agreed on a slightly different arrangement for next year. The IPPC vice-chair (who is always one of the three IPPC faculty representatives who serves on FEC-9) will consult regularly with the Chair of FEC, and the entire FEC if necessary. FEC-9 will meet when issues requiring the whole committee's attention emerge. A long term arrangement will be established once we sort out whether any broad reforms will be applied to the governance system overall, at which point this pilot program will be adjusted as appropriate.

OTHER BUSINESS

FEC was consulted on a number of smaller matters as well, which include the following. Dean of the Faculty Muriel Poston inquired about adding to Beau Breslin's title Director of First-Year Experience the additional label, Assistant Dean, and renaming the Dean of Studies Office as the Office of Academic Advising, and revising the *Faculty Handbook* so that the DOF would be permitted to send a designee as her representative to serve on Curriculum Committee. After consulting with CAPT, CEPP and Curriculum Committee, FEC posed a series of questions about these proposals and ultimately responded affirmatively to Dean Poston.

Representing IPPC, Barbara Krause shared with FEC a new document proposing a process for handling major capital building projects in our governance system. That proposal includes the

formation of a new committee, the Space Planning Working Group. FEC expressed a concern about the faculty voice being robust enough in such work. We endorsed the provisional formation of the SPWG for this year and next, with the agreement that the long-term constitution of this committee will be revisited next year after our work on the overall governance system matures more.

Jeff Segrave, the Dean of Special Programs, asked if FEC has any concerns about establishing consistent labeling for the Masters program. He thinks the title should be Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies Program (as opposed to the External Masters of Arts or anything else), to which we agreed.

FEC was asked for and did provide assistance in identifying faculty willing to serve on the search committee for a new chaplain and the review committee for Dean of Admissions and Student Aid, Mary Lou Bates.

AGENDA FOR 2009-2010

- Service and governance
- IPPC/FEC6/FEC9
- Board of Trustee observations
- Form, substance and attendance of Faculty Meetings
- Responsible governance during a period of constrained financial resources
- Policy for FEC elections
- FEC's Operating Code

MEMBERSHIP

2008-2009

Lisa Aronson
Sue Bender (IPPC Vice-Chair and Representative)
John Brueggemann (Chair)
Jennifer Delton
Pat Hilleren
Mark Huibregtse (IPPC Representative)
Dan Hurwitz
Phyllis Roth (IPPC Representative)
Natalie Taylor

2009-2010

Sue Bender (on leave Fall 09, IPPC Representative Spring 10)
John Brueggemann
Hugh Foley (IPPC Representative)
Pat Hilleren
Dan Hurwitz (Chair)
Karen Kellogg
Reg Lilly
Natalie Taylor
Adrienne Zuerner (IPPC Representative)
Tim Harper (Fall 09 IPPC Representative)

APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF THE PROCESS BEHIND THE DECISION TO TERMINATE THE UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS (UWW) PROGRAM

The Faculty Executive Committee believes it is useful to chronicle the process by which the Skidmore College faculty came to recommend that the UWW Program be terminated at the February 27, 2009 faculty meeting. This overview provides a chronology of events, summarizes concerns about the process, and offers some conclusions about lessons for the future.

TIMELINE

Spring 2006

- *UWW Program Self-Study*, commissioned by Paula Newberg (Dean of Special Programs); final report submitted June 30, 2006

Spring 2007

- *Eduventures*, a marketing consulting firm, was commissioned by Jeff Segrave (Interim Dean of Special Programs) to assess UWW's marketing strategy and make recommendations; reports submitted June-November, 2007
- *Special Programs Study Group* - Susan Kress (Vice President of Academic Affairs) formed the group on January 25, 2007; Committee members: Jim Chansky (ODSP), Tom Denny (Music), Ginger Ertz (Tang), Jeff Segrave (ODSP, Chair), Linda Simon (English), Justin Sipher (IT), Mike Thomas (Financial Affairs), Sandy Welter (MALS), Joanna Zangrando (American Studies); final report submitted October 27, 2007 and then distributed to college community and discussed in multiple venues including Academic Staff and two open forums
- *External Review* - Led by Jeff Segrave (Interim Dean of Special Programs): April 5, 2007; Reviewers: Myra Bloom (Director of Continuing Education, Sarah Lawrence College) and James W. Hall (Chancellor and President Emeritus, Antioch University and SUNY/Empire State College); final report submitted May, 2007 and then shared with college community as an appendix in the SPSG Final Report

Spring 2008

- Susan Kress proposes that the College close the UWW Program, March 7, 2008
- Susan Kress makes the decision to suspend enrollment of new UWW students
- CEPP convenes a special Faculty Meeting, facilitated by FEC, March 21, 2008

- Susan Kress consults FEC and CEPP about the process for considering closing UWW on March 28, 2008; FEC and CEPP agree that *Faculty Handbook* language for the “Elimination of a Department” provides the best, albeit imperfect, guidance
- CEPP holds a community meeting for faculty, staff, alums and other interested parties, April 23, 2008
- CEPP introduces a motion to close UWW, April 25, 2008
- Motion to close UWW defeated at the Faculty Meeting on May 14, 2008.; the vote was 65 in favor, 68 opposed, 1 abstention
- Susan Kress forms the UWW Working Group on June 1, 2008. Committee members: Barbara Beck (Human Resources), Grace Burton (Foreign Languages and Literatures), Sharon Clemmey (Registrar’s Office and UWW Student), Winston Grady-Willis (American Studies), Dan Hurwitz (FEC, Mathematics and Computer Science), Jim Kennelly (Management and Business, former Interim Director of UWW, Co-Chair), Deborah Meyers (Interim Director of UWW), Dan Nathan (CEPP Chair and American Studies), Muriel Poston (Dean of Faculty), Jeff Segrave (ODSP, Co-Chair), Justin Sipher (IT), Sheldon Solomon (Chair of UWWC and Psychology), Michael Thomas (Financial Affairs); final Report submitted, November 2008

Fall 2008

- A preliminary version of the UWWWG’s report is presented to Academic Staff on August 28, 2008 in order for the UWWWG to get some faculty feedback
- The UWW Working Group submits its final report to Susan Kress in November 2008. The group undertook to develop a new model and explore what would be necessary to sustain it
- Susan Kress consulted FEC on November 24, 2008 about how to proceed with the report; she reported that the UWWWG report would be shared with the college community, including President’s Cabinet, VPAA staff, Special Programs groups, Academic Staff, IPPC, CEPP

Spring 2009

- CEPP and IPPC sponsor a joint motion on the Faculty Floor recommending closure of the UWW program, February 6, 2009; as the previous year, they use *Faculty Handbook* language related to the considering the elimination of a department for guidance
- Curriculum Committee endorses CEPP/IPPC motion, February 10, 2009
- CEPP holds a special faculty meeting, facilitated by FEC, February 13, 2009

- CEPP holds a community meeting for faculty, staff, students, alums and other interested parties, February 17, 2009
- Faculty votes to recommend closure of the UWW program on February 27, 2009; the vote was 106 in favor, 20 opposed, 5 abstentions
- President announces he accepts the faculty's recommendation at the April 3 faculty meeting; he will propose to the Board of Trustees that the College close UWW
- President informs college community via email on May 20 that the Board of Trustees has accepted the proposal to close UWW. He notes intentions to "implement a 'teach-out' plan that will structure a reasonable period of transition to allow currently enrolled UWW students to complete their degree requirements; reach out to all UWW alumni, alumnae, and donors to assure them that all UWW students and graduates are and always will remain valued members of the Skidmore community; explore further options to support Skidmore employees who wish to take credit-bearing courses toward completion of a Skidmore degree; develop plans to celebrate the longstanding successes of UWW and the commitment of faculty, staff, and students whose associations with the program have enriched the College for nearly 40 years."

EXPRESSED CONCERNS

At different points throughout this process, various community members raised questions and complaints about the process. We will not specifically address or answer all the particular concerns, but we record them here as part of the historical record.

Was the community given sufficient opportunity to study and discuss all the relevant matters?

Should the language in the *Faculty Handbook* be revised so as to require a "supermajority" (or 2/3) vote in the consideration of closing an academic program?

Was it appropriate for the VPAA to make the decision to not accept new UWW students while the program's future was under consideration?

Was it appropriate for the UWWWG Report to identify "a majority" of committee members as not supporting its own model when the group had not formally debated the matter as a group?

Should language be added to the *Faculty Handbook* that can guide decision-making for other comparable circumstances?

Should the faculty express its view when the administration or Board is likely to make its own decision anyway?

COMMENTARY

Members of the Faculty Executive Committee believe that the process by which the UWW program was terminated was procedurally sound and conducted with integrity. The decision to close a program is likely to generate a high degree of disagreement, discontent, and distrust. This is why it is important to have in place sound and transparent procedures that allow all community members the opportunity to deliberate on, challenge, and fully discuss such a decision. In consultation with relevant faculty committees, the administration decided to follow the procedures in the *Faculty Handbook* for the termination of a department (Part One, Section XVII). Although the UWW program was in many ways very different from an academic department, the FEC believes that these procedures worked well enough and that there is no reason to revise the *Faculty Handbook* in anticipation of other such scenarios.

Faculty committees were involved in the process every step of the way. CEPP, IPPC, and FEC were not only consulted but also played key roles in bringing the proposal to the faculty floor for discussion. The UWWWG researched alternative scenarios for an improved UWW program and carefully considered the implications of such alternatives, presenting their findings in their report.

The FEC believes that when committees take on substantial work, the faculty in general should consider that work very carefully. This is not to suggest that the faculty have to agree with the conclusions of any given committee. But our governance system depends on faculty believing that their work on committees matters and that it will be taken seriously.

APPENDIX B*

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING: A REPORT ON THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

I. THE PROBLEM

A number of faculty in different venues have expressed concerns about how governance and service work at Skidmore. One of the main issues is that the Faculty Executive Committee routinely has difficulty getting faculty to serve on committees, including those central to the governance system.

Our understanding of these issues is informed by the following sources: FEC's survey on service, Susan Walzer's scholarly research on faculty culture, meetings with Committee of Committees, IPPC, Academic Staff, the VP for Academic Affairs, several ex-members of CAPT from recent years, email communications with the Dean of the Faculty, Department Chairs and Program Directors, and Chairs of all major committees, various conversations with individual faculty, as well as our own observations and deliberations. This work has led us to several preliminary conclusions.

- We reiterate our commitment to a strong system of faculty governance situated in the context of shared, college governance.
- The committee system is out of control. We have more commitments than we can collectively fulfill. The key indication is too many committee spots per faculty member.
- We risk our effectiveness as a governing body at the College because we are spread too thin. Maintaining that effectiveness requires enhancing our efficiency.
- Most of our commitments are productive and valuable, but too much of a good thing is still too much. The recent proliferation of committee work appears to be based on robust strategic planning (e.g., CIGU, FYE, Responsible Citizenship Task Force) and energetic grassroots educational initiatives (e.g., Water Resources Initiative, Environmental Studies, IRB, Health Professions Advisory Committee).
- As in most every institutional endeavor at this time, we must learn to do more with less. The impact of economic scarcity on governance likely means that the utilization of course releases or stipends in service will decrease.
- The nature of bureaucracy is to protect and expand itself. Each committee has a very difficult time imagining a different way of doing things. Any real reform therefore requires a broad institutional commitment, most importantly including the will of the faculty.
- This issue is about structural arrangements related to formal rules of the system as well as cultural values in terms of certain habits that contribute to the overall problem.

II. DATA

A. OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE WORK

FEC-Eligible Faculty	264
Average Number of Faculty on Sabbatical	17

Average Number of Faculty Available for Committee Work	247
Number of Institutional Committee Spots for Faculty	220
Number of Institutional Committee Spots Vacant	19 ¹
Number of Institutional Committee Spots Occupied	207
Number of Available Faculty per Committee Spot	1.12
Number of Faculty on 1 Committee	71
Number of Faculty on 2 Committees	41
Number of Faculty on 3 Committees	11
Number of Faculty on 4 Committees	4
Number of Faculty on 5 Committees	1
Number of Faculty on at Least One Committee	128
Number of Available Faculty on 0 committees	119 ²

B. INVENTORY OF FACULTY COMMITTEE SPOTS³

<i>Faculty Committees</i>	<i>Faculty Spots</i>
Committee on Appointments, Promotions and Tenure⁴	6
Faculty Executive Committee	6
Committee on Educational Policies and Planning	6
CEPP Subcommittees	
Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs	4
Grade Grievance Subcommittee	3
Assessment Steering Committee	4
Dean of Studies Review Committee	6
UWW Working Group	6
Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights	6
Curriculum Committee	6
Curriculum Committee Subcommittees	
Routine Matters Subcommittee	1
Writing Initiative Subcommittee	2
Self-Determined Majors Subcommittee	4
Faculty Development Committee	4
Tenure Review Board	3
Tenure Appeal Committee (CAPT+TRB)	0 ⁵
Honors Forum Council	4
University Without Walls Committee	4
External Master of Arts for Liberal Studies Committee	4
Athletic Council	4
Committee on Academic Standing	3

¹ We believe this number reflects vacancies as well as a few names we could not track down.

² This number may not seem so large if we consider the numerous faculty who have substantive reasons for not serving at any given time. This might include the 24 department chairs, 10 program directors, roughly 20 tenure-track faculty in their first or second year, the various colleagues who have just finished significant institutional committee work and/or are engaged in substantial departmental work, those denied reappointment or tenure, those on maternity leave, personal leave, or phased retirement.

³ This list reflects our documented committee work at the institution during this year. Our premise is that, while many of these committees are not permanent, we tend to have a certain amount of such temporary groups at work at any given moment. This snapshot provides a rough indication of our general level of activity.

⁴ We maintain that the six emboldened committees (CAPT, CEPP, FEC, CAFR, Curriculum Committee, IPPC), the “big six” central governance committees, warrant special attention.

⁵ The faculty on TAC consider themselves already accounted for as members of TRB and CAPT.

Faculty Advisory Board	6
Advisory Panel	0 ⁶
Total	92

All-College Committees

Institutional Policy and Planning Committee	4
IPPC Subcommittees	
Budget and Finance Subcommittee	2
Admissions and Financial Aid Subcommittee	2
Student Affairs Subcommittee	3
Committee Intercultural and Global Understanding	3
Bias Response Group	1
Campus Environment Committee	3
Integrity Board	2
Board of Appeals	2
Honor Code Commission	1
Information Resource Council	3
Institutional Review Board	4
Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee	4
Safety in Workplace Committee	3
Total	37

Advisory Committees

Engineering Advisory Committee	4
Environmental Studies Steering Committee	9
Health Professions Advisory Committee	7
Neuroscience Steering Committee	4
Women's Studies Advisory Board	3
Fulbright Advisor	1
Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Committee	6
Total	34

Search and Review Committees

Dean of Admissions Review Committee	2
Director of Arts Administration Search Committee	7
Chaplain Search Committee	1
Total	10

Prize Committees

Palamountain Prose Award Committee	4
Periclean Honor Society Executive Committee	5
Peace for Justice Prize Committee	1
Porter Prize Committee	10
Total	20

FYE Committees

Living Learning Group	2
Candace Carlucci Backus First-Year Prize Committee	2
Teagle Review Committee	3
New Faculty Seminar Program	7
Total	10

⁶ Members of Advisory Panel are drawn from the Faculty Advisory Board. Depending on the cases that arise, none or all FAB members may be drawn in to actual committee work. Therefore, members of AP are in some sense a subset of the members of FAB.

Other Committees and Task Forces

Center Study Group (Teaching and Learning)	3
Responsible Citizenship Task Force	5
Sustainable Food Initiative Lead Team	1
Martin Luther King Jr. Planning Committee	1
Water Resources Initiative	4
Greenberg Advisory Board	3
Other Miscellaneous Committees ⁷	?
Total	13

Overlapping Membership

(Committee chairs/members who serve on other committees)
CEPP Chair serves on IRC, IPPC, and CC Writing Subcommittee
CIGU Chair serves on IPPC
Campus Environment Committee Chair serves on IPPC
Tenure Appeal Committee consists of TRB and CAPT
Two members of FAB serve on AP
Three members of IPPC sit on FEC

Grand Total 226

C. DEPARTMENT AND PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Countless forms of service are required in departments and programs every day, some of which takes place in the context of formal committees, especially in large departments, and much of which does not, especially in small departments. This service includes work related to curriculum, personnel, strategic initiatives, advising, budgets, infrastructure, capstones, student prizes, faculty development, admissions, alumni relations, and so on. This work surely relates to two items mentioned above we do not fully understand: the 119 faculty members who are not serving on an institutional committee and the numerous “Other Miscellaneous Committees,” which are often invisible to colleagues not directly involved.

III. SOLUTIONS

A. A STRUCTURAL SHIFT

We hope the faculty will consider altering several structural conditions along the following lines.

1. Formally emphasize service on the “big six” central governance committees in new Faculty Handbook language.
2. Revise the Annual Report Summary of Activities form of faculty so as to distinguish more carefully different kinds of service, including work on the central governance committees.
3. Reduce the overall number of faculty spots on committees by approximately 30 percent (and where appropriate those of other stakeholders).

⁷ We have learned that there are numerous additional committees attending to various kinds of college business, many of which never become known to the campus community. This largely invisible work often involves the development of grants, curriculum, infrastructure and so on. We believe that this category, which appears to be growing as a result of strategic planning, entails significant labor not captured in any formal list of committees.

B. A CULTURAL SHIFT

We also hope the faculty will rethink several cultural habits and adopt the following new working principles of governance.

1. Be lean. All things being equal, the smaller the committee the better. It is easier to plan meetings and make decisions. We must balance this goal with appropriate inclusiveness. But we have probably erred too much on the side of inclusion in recent years. (IPPC with 19 members, the new standing subcommittee of IPPC, CIGU with 15, and the new Task Force on Responsible Citizenship with 12 come to mind.)
2. Emphasize consultation more and representation less. Not every committee needs to have multiple representatives from across college divisions, academic departments or even different pools of expertise. Different colleagues could be consulted productively in the context of more focused, limited timeframes, thus saving their time that would not have to be spent in all the body's meetings and keeping the overall number of each committee down.
3. Attend carefully to the relative weight of faculty voices on any committee compared to that of other constituencies. We should add or subtract individuals representing different stakeholders with consideration for the right balance in terms of the main goals of the committee in question.
4. Serve and protect the central governance committees in special ways. We must make sure that the faculty's commitment to IPPC, FEC, CAPT, CEPP, CAFR and Curriculum Committee is always robust.
5. Use ad hoc committees when a particular challenge requires experts focused on a short-term project. Standing committees will be in a better position to attend to their normal operations when such ad hoc committees are utilized.
6. Direct the results of ad hoc committees' efforts through standing committees in the governance system. Important decisions based on ad hoc committees' work should be avoided without substantive consideration within appropriate standing committees.
7. Invite staff and administrators to take on and/or share in work faculty can afford to surrender for which the relevant personnel are qualified.
8. Require every committee to assess regularly whether it is engaged in worthwhile work. We need to be vigilant about eradicating wasteful habits. And there is no resource we can afford to waste less than our precious time.
9. As much as possible, avoid scheduling committee meetings during the winter or summer breaks. There is growing creep in to large blocks of time previously protected for other activities.
10. Pay special attention to how often and when meetings are held in general. Utilize efficient means of communication (e.g., email) as often as possible without undermining substantive deliberation.
11. Foster awareness among colleagues about the importance of the faculty's active ownership of and thoughtful participation in college governance.

* The version of this report included here is slightly revised from the one presented on April 3. The changes only involve adjusted numbers for committee spots, which are based on input provided from faculty members since our report was initially circulated. We nevertheless recognize that the numbers still represent an incomplete accounting of all the committee work being carried out at Skidmore.