

Faculty Executive Committee Annual Report 2010-2011

Routine Matters: There were several matters of a routine nature that the FEC dealt with in 2010-2011.

- The FEC chair was consulted by the VPAA regarding several administration appointments during the summer months.
- The FEC chair attended the New Faculty Orientation to inform faculty about service opportunities at Skidmore.
- The FEC met weekly throughout the year, as well as participated in special meetings. The Chair of the FEC and the faculty Vice-Chair of the IPPC met weekly to apprise each other of matters that came before their respective committees.
- The FEC presented the Faculty with the 2010-2011 *Faculty Handbook* for its adoption.
- The FEC ran four rounds of elections, filling 21 positions on 17 committees.
- The FEC observed many of the sessions of the three regular Board of Trustees Meetings held on campus.
- The FEC convened a Committee of Committees at the end of the fall and spring semesters to discuss the state of faculty governance both internally as well as in relation to the administration.

Consultations: The FEC consulted with the administration concerning the following matters: Standards of Business Practice Conduct Policy; Parental Leave Policy; senior position in Special Programs; American with Disabilities Act Advisory Group; and Intellectual Property Policy.

There were communications with the DOF concerning the Space Planning Working Group (SPWG). The status and function of this group with regard to the Faculty and faculty representation presents matters in need of further consideration. The SPWG is another instance of a general concern of FEC, which is the transformation of working groups into duly constituted committees with faculty representation.

Motions: There were five motions present to the Faculty by the FEC. All passed.

1. The *Faculty Handbook* for 2010-2011.
2. Division of Disciplines.
3. Discontinue IPPC faculty member from also serving on the FEC.
4. Reduce the membership of the FEC by one faculty member.
5. Reconfigure the Honors Forum Council and Periclean Honors Society.
6. Reduce the CAFR membership by one faculty member.

Membership Reduction: FEC worked to implement the reduction of committee membership passed by the Faculty in the previous year. Beyond the reductions brought before the Faculty, reduction of other committees was discussed. Several committees decided not to reduce their membership; others hold open the option of doing so at a later time.

FEC Reconfiguration/Reduction: The reconfiguration of the FEC membership, separating the connection between the six 'regular' members of the FEC and the three members of the IPPC that were also members of the FEC, was driven by two concerns. First, very practically, scheduling meetings of 9 faculty with any regularity is nearly impossible, and secondly, there is a question of faculty consultation. In many cases, the administration is called upon by the *Faculty Handbook* to consult with the FEC. The original idea of 'FEC 6+3' was to expand the FEC's purview to include the IPPC and the various

administrative offices and committees directly responsible to IPPC. It was believed that having members of the IPPC also be members of the FEC would deepen the FEC's engagement with all-College affairs. However, this has not proven to be the case, and further, there was a possible ambiguity regarding whether IPPC was *de facto* in consultation with the FEC insofar as three of its members were also members of the FEC. Splitting the membership of the IPPC and the FEC makes it clearer that any requirement that the IPPC consult the FEC cannot be satisfied simply by conducting its business with a membership that had included members of the FEC.

Elections: FEC ran four rounds of elections, and was able to supply faculty representation for almost all positions. However, the FEC continues to be concerned that for some elections, and even for some of the 'major' committees, there was not a sufficient number of persons expressing a willingness to serve so as to offer voters a choice.

Administrative Support: The FEC initiated conversations with the DOF about regularizing administrative support for service to the College. Faculty governance is increasingly strained by the Administration's efforts to reduce administrative costs for governance, and the increasing technological and clerical needs of various committees. The FEC began conversations with the DOF about regularizing administrative support so that there will be an established status quo to assist faculty in planning and committee transition.

Governance Web Site: FEC worked with IT to transfer governance web sites to the cms.skidmore.edu domain, and sought to help committees keep the information on their web sites current. There are clear challenges to committee web pages being well maintained when the chair of most committees changes every year, and given the variable expertise among the faculty for doing web site maintenance.

Division of Disciplines: In August of 2010 the DOF approached the Chair of the FEC about an ambiguity in the Division of Disciplines that is used by the Faculty for establishing representation on committees, task forces, etc., when disciplinary expertise is an issue. The DOF had developed and used a different division of disciplines for administrative purposes. The DOF and the FEC believed that it was desirable for the administrative, academic and the governance structures to coincide as far as possible. Because the DOF's division of disciplines followed from an academic vision, and the extant governance structure was similarly based on a longstanding academic vision of the College which had, with program changes over time, become less appropriate and reflective of the College, the DOF and the FEC believed it would be important to involve the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP) in thinking about revising the academic, administrative and governance structures so they might, once again, be in sync. After several conversations between the FEC and the CEPP, the CEPP declined to engage this project, saying they saw no problem in there being different lists for different purposes. Nevertheless, changes in and ambiguities about academic standing as evidenced by the more flexibly changing administrative structure devised by the DOF created difficulties for governance and presented a quandary for the FEC: how to change the division of disciplines and what would be the best structure of this division so that administrative and governance structures wouldn't be disjunctive. Before setting out itself, or convening a body, to examine the various structural considerations and possibilities for a revised Division of Disciplines, the FEC, in consultation with the DOF, felt it was important to have an 'official' starting point, and as there is in the *Faculty Handbook* a reference to the "divisions" of the college without its enumerating what they are, the FEC brought a motion to the Faculty to state simply what the status quo understanding and practice regarding this 'division' had in fact been for thirty or more years. Future FECs may find a propitious moment to take up again the search for the most appropriate

structure of academic, administrative, and governance affairs. The willingness of the administrative, governance and academic constituencies to engage this complex issue is necessary for success.

Faculty Meetings and Fora: The FEC, along with the CEPP, sponsored a faculty-only open forum to discuss the “Transition and Transformation” initiative. This was successful in promoting open and sustained debate. Past FECs have also held such faculty-only open forums that were similarly productive. The FEC received a detailed proposal to modify the manner in which the monthly Faculty Meetings are structured. While FEC found the proposal promising, it was not able to give sufficient deliberation to the proposal to bring anything to the Faculty at this time. Future FECs may revisit the question of how to make the best use of the monthly meetings. The FEC does continue to be concerned about widespread dissatisfaction among the faculty about a perceived imbalance between reporting and deliberating at Faculty Meetings.

The FEC and Governance: The *Faculty Handbook* clearly states the basic responsibilities of the FEC are “to act as the primary conduit of information and ideas into and out of the Faculty concerning all-College issues and policies” and for “coordinating faculty committee work and for furthering democratic representation.” To this end, the FEC serves as the primary representative of the Faculty as a whole as such in the Faculty’s commerce with the Administration. Its basic function of overseeing faculty governance is to ensure that the interests and self-determination of the Faculty as a whole are safeguarded and that democratic principles are observed and served by the system of faculty governance in its own workings and in its commerce with the Administration.

There were several developments during the 2010-2011 academic year that presented a challenge to the FEC’s fulfilling these duties. Each was an instance in which initiatives were pursued without proper and adequate involvement with the Faculty and its system of governance; each seemed propitiated by the fallacy of ‘mistaking the part for the whole’ (synecdoche) concerning what “faculty representation” denotes. As for the latter, the FEC holds that “faculty representation” denotes, in the first and final instance, the Faculty as a whole as constituted in its regular Faculty Meeting. Inasmuch as the FEC represents the Faculty as a whole *as such* in governance matters, only consultation with the FEC can satisfy the requirement that there be ‘Faculty representation’ or ‘consultation with the Faculty’ in lieu of bringing a matter to the floor of the Faculty. In more than one instance the synecdochic error in reasoning occurred when an individual member or members of the faculty were consulted or enlisted by administrative entities or self-constituted working groups. These select individuals were then taken to be representatives for ‘the Faculty as such.’ Neither the Administration nor any *ad hoc* group may select an individual to represent the Faculty. A representative of the Faculty may be chosen only by direct election by the Faculty, or by that committee explicitly charged by the Faculty to oversee faculty governance, viz., the FEC. Adhering to this is important for preventing cronyism.

One such challenge occurred when an entity or entities formed the Transition and Transformation Working Group (TTWG) and another occurred when an entity or entities formulated, applied for, and received a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to “launch a major initiative to advance, institutionalize and sustain a comprehensive program of civic engagement in the curriculum.”ⁱ The manner in which these initiatives were pursued clearly violated the procedures set out in “Part Two, Section II, subsection 16” of the *Faculty Handbook* for the establishment of such groups (their appellation is less important than their nature, charge and composition). The FEC sought to assure that the Faculty was not being circumvented, and that substantive policy changes be brought to the Faculty floor. Although the “Transition and Transformation” initiative was relatively far advanced by the time the FEC learned of it – an extensive and detailed presentation was given to the Board of Trustees in February -- and clearly linked to other initiatives even further advanced (such as the AVD grant), the Administration agreed to disaggregate the career services component from the academic

components, and to slow down the advance of this initiative so that the Faculty could be properly consulted regarding the components that bear on educational policy and planning. The CEPP will begin to deliberate this initiative in the coming year, and the FEC looks forward to this initiative being brought before the Faculty.

The College applied for and received a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis (AVD) Foundations without this initiative ever being brought before the Faculty or the FEC, or any properly constituted faculty committee, an initiative that makes explicit and arguably far-reaching changes in the College's curriculum and educational policy. This clearly violates the democratic spirit and letter of the *Faculty Handbook*. The FEC met with President Glotzbach in May 2011 to express its concern and determination that the will of the Faculty on this and all other matters that properly concern it be respected. By not having properly consulted the Faculty, the College finds itself in the awkward position of having promised the AVD Foundations that changes in educational culture and curriculum would be made at the College, of having received funds on the basis of those promises, but not having properly consulted and secured the requisite support from the Faculty. The Administration has given no clear indication yet on how to resolve this conundrum; the FEC remains, as always, committed to the Faculty retaining its right to self-determination regarding curricular and educational policy changes.

Committee Oversight: The FEC is charged to oversee the commerce between the Administration and the Faculty as well as to oversee the system of faculty governance itself; this includes representing the interests of the Faculty as a whole when Administration-generated *ad hoc* groups undertake to explore and advance agendas that are of consequence to the Faculty. Indeed, the *Faculty Handbook* clearly states the necessary involvement of the FEC in establishing such groups, a requirement neglected by those involved in the TTWG and the AVD grant, as mentioned above. All committees have their specific field of concern – the CAPT deals with promotions/tenure/appointments, Curriculum Committee with the curriculum, the CEPP with educational policy and curriculum, etc. A principal and unique charge of the FEC is to oversee the working of the committees comprising the system of faculty governance especially with regard to matters of governance and democratic representation. For example, it is a longstanding practice based on sound governance principles that, when positions unexpectedly come open on a committee, those committees do not themselves fill those positions on their own, but must seek the help of the FEC to fill those vacancies; given this as well as the principles whose neglect led to the difficulties surrounding the TTWG and the AVD, the following seems clearly to follow: when a faculty committee forms an *ad hoc* committee whose charge is to review and recommend academic and professional policy regarding the Faculty, and seeks faculty representation beyond its own membership, those committees must follow the same procedures the Administration must follow when forming an *ad hoc* committee. Just as the Administration may not select what faculty are going to represent the Faculty, so, too, no committee other than the FEC may determine which faculty may represent the Faculty, or whether the composition and charge of the committee is in accord with sound principles of representation. This requires the committee consult with FEC regarding the charge and composition of the committee, and that the FEC continue to safeguard the principles of substantive and democratic representation of the Faculty on *ad hoc* committees and the populating of these committees.

During conversations the FEC had with the Administration concerning procedural and governance issues bearing on the TTWG, the Administration agreed it had erred in its formation of the TTWG by not observing the requirements in the *Faculty Handbook* for forming and charging this group, but it was suggested that if some faculty committee had instead constituted the identical TTWG as an *ad hoc* committee, this would have satisfied requirements of good governance. The FEC believes this proposal commits the same error in reasoning (synecdoche) noted above: a faculty committee believing that, as a part of the system of faculty governance, it thereby had authority to act in the name of that system of governance as such by changing or adding to that system. It seems quite clear that neither the

CEPP nor any committee other than the FEC has the responsibility and jurisdiction to appoint committees that comprise the system of faculty governance and that work in the name of the Faculty. Committees are obliged to consult that committee whose explicit charge is overseeing and safeguarding the system of faculty governance (viz., the FEC), just as they may not fill their own vacancies. Failing proper consultation with the FEC, the TTWG was improperly constituted regardless of who sponsored it. This in no way prevents a faculty committee from forming subcommittees from its membership, or of consultation with other committees, or the formation of joint committees.ⁱⁱ

No doubt, faculty committees as well as the Administration in the past have appointed *ad hoc* committees, and that even in most cases these have successfully done important and fine work for the Faculty and the College. However, the episodes mentioned above indicate that this practice is precarious, and past success may be due more to good fortune than good governance. Following good governance practices and safeguarding the role of the Faculty in college life do not guarantee excellent results, of course, but failing to observe these practices is to invite trouble. It is the responsibility of future FECs to review committee operating codes and the *Faculty Handbook* to assure that they observe democratic principles and the interests of the Faculty. The FEC is aware that there are inconsistencies that need correction.

FEC – IPPC: The Administration, under the aegis of the IPPC, has the capacity for generating a system of committees and task forces to promote its agenda. These committees and work groups may, indeed, deal with College matters that properly reside with the Faculty either in whole or in part, and may overlap with and even conflict with matters dealt with in the system of faculty governance. This obviously occurred with the TTWG. That these committees, task forces, and work groups tend to enlist participation of faculty (to whatever extent that they do) who have a special interest in the matter at hand is not surprising nor even objectionable, but when these *ad hoc* committees, work groups, etc., undertake the formulation of College policy, then FEC's concern is that the principles of democratic representation be observed. This involves, first, that the Faculty as a whole be apprised of the nature, scope, and goals of the project proposed, and that membership in the group be open to the broad spectrum of individuals that is the Faculty, rather than a clique. All this is stated in the *Faculty Handbook*, "Part Two, section II, subsection 16."

The generation of a system of committees under the auspices of the IPPC presents a number of structural challenges to faculty governance. These may come in the form of committees pursuing agendas for the College without it being clear what responsibility these committees have to the Faculty, and it certainly presents a contrary movement to the FEC's efforts to 'downsize' and streamline faculty governance by reducing the overall number of slots that the Faculty needs to fill in order to fully staff the governance system, always a challenge. Two subcommittees of the IPPC-- the Subcommittee on International and Global Understanding as well as the recently proposed Subcommittee on Responsible Citizenship--occasioned this concern when they were proposed during the last few years.

Faculty Representation and Policy Initiation: The FEC believes that significant policy developments should be brought before the Faculty in a meaningful manner. Any faculty member may bring any matter before the Faculty, but the FEC believes it has a special responsibility to assure that substantive policy matters are brought before the Faculty in an appropriate manner. However, there is considerable ambiguity about what constitutes 'significant policy development,' as well as what satisfies 'bring before the Faculty.' The 'Strategic Renewal' document, produced by the President, may be seen merely as an elaboration of the Strategic Agenda that was indeed brought before the Faculty, or it may be seen as introducing new and significant policies and commitments that have not been sufficiently debated by the Faculty. The Strategic Action Agenda, an annual administrative agenda that flows from the previous documents, may similarly be seen in different lights. In its first conversations with the Administration

concerning “Transition and Transformation,” the FEC was told that it proposed nothing that wasn’t already being done at Skidmore and therefore was not a significant policy that need be brought before the Faculty.

Similarly ‘bring before the Faculty’ is open to a variety of interpretations. The Administration suggested to the FEC that, since there were faculty members on the IPPC, any one of which has the right to bring matters before the Faculty, meant that a matter brought to IPPC was simultaneously being brought before the Faculty; or, it was argued, the presence on the IPPC of faculty members who were also members of the FEC constituted bringing a matter before the FEC, hence the Faculty’s governance representative. Or again, Strategic Renewal was announced at the May Faculty Meeting of 2010, but never debated or put to a vote. The Strategic Action Agenda was sent out as an email attachment to the Faculty in November, 2010. In formulating and submitting the AVD grant proposal, the Administration enlisted a few faculty to join in the work, evidently believing thereby to have brought this initiative before the Faculty.

Given the ambiguities regarding what constitutes substantive and significant policy developments that properly must be brought to the Faculty, as well as what it means to bring matters before the Faculty, the FEC has believed it to be prudent to err on the side of caution, and to work to assure that, if there is doubt, matters should be brought to the floor of the Faculty.

Respectfully submitted,
Reg Lilly

Members of the Faculty Executive Committee, 2010-2011.

Reg Lilly (Chair)

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ⁱ “Proposal to the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations: ‘Civic Engagement in the Curriculum’,” p. 1, no author, no date.

ⁱⁱ The membership of a subcommittee is a subset of the committee that creates the subcommittee. Joint committees are committees whose membership is drawn from the membership of the two or more committees that join together for some purpose. Ad hoc committees are committees whose membership is, in whole or in part, not derived from the membership of the authorizing committee.