

## **Faculty Executive Committee Annual Report 2011-2012**

The Faculty Executive Committee reports that, in its estimation, the 2011-2012 academic year was a year of effective faculty governance. We base this assessment on our own work, our involvement in various collaborations throughout the year, our interactions with other committees and the administration, and what we have learned from the two Committee of Committees meetings this year. What follows is a report of our committee work, presented in additional detail, beginning with a quick enumeration of routine matters that FEC oversees.

### **Routine Matters:**

--Over the summer, FEC approved the 2011-2012 Faculty Meeting schedule.\* Also prior to the start of the fall semester, the FEC chair attended the New Faculty Orientation to inform faculty about service opportunities at Skidmore.

\*(It was later brought to FEC's attention in the spring semester that the April faculty meeting fell on Good Friday and the beginning of Passover. As a way of avoiding such scheduling conflicts in the future, FEC has asked for and received a religious holiday calendar from Skidmore's religious leaders. It is now part of FEC's operating code to check Faculty Meeting dates against this holiday calendar.)

--During the academic year, FEC met weekly.

--FEC presented the Faculty with the 2011-2012 *Faculty Handbook* for adoption.

--FEC ran four rounds of elections: Rounds I and II in the fall semester; Rounds III and IV in the spring.

--Led by the committee's web author, FEC worked to update the governance website (including FEC's own website) and maintain it—with an eye to greater accuracy—throughout the year. Updating the site also gave FEC the opportunity to inquire about committee attendance and to regularize committees' membership. (Motion #3 below was a consequence of this work.)

--FEC observed the Board of Trustees meetings in October and in May. The February Board meeting was a retreat in Washington D.C., which made FEC observation impossible.

--FEC convened a Committee of Committees meeting at the end of both the fall and the spring semesters to discuss committee operations as well as working relationships among committees and between committees and the administration.

--It is part of FEC's routine work to gather throughout the year changes, updates, and corrections to the *Faculty Handbook*, which are then brought to the faculty for adoption through a vote. Given the recombination of the DOF and VPAA positions, this routine task became quite monumental—and it was the herculean task of FEC in April to review all changes due to this restructuring. After some assiduous “dividing and conquering,” we completed our review.

--The FEC chair attended the fall and spring Academic Affairs retreats.

**Motions:** FEC presented five\* motions to the Faculty. All passed.

1. Adoption of the 2011-2012 *Faculty Handbook*. (Part of this involved updating the language in Part III, 1, B, 1 regarding IPPC in light of last year's disbanding of the FEC-9/FEC-6 distinction.)
2. MALS membership to reflect the Division of Disciplines.
3. CAS membership changes.
4. *Faculty Handbook* language changes pertaining to the new Article X. These were a revision to Part Two, II, 14; insertion of a new Part Two, II [16]; and a revision of Part Two, II, 2.
5. By-Laws for Faculty Meetings.
6. \*A sixth motion, collaborated on with the CC, for new *Faculty Handbook* language pertaining to the establishment and elimination of minors was ready to present but then delayed until fall 2012.

**Consultations:**

--FEC assisted Dean of the Faculty Beau Breslin in a pilot program to identify an advisory panel of department and program chairs—the Chairs Advisory Group—to weigh in on tenure allocation searches. Both Dean Breslin and FEC believe this year's pilot was a success, and we will confer with the DOF/VPAA next year about the arrangement's ongoing usefulness. FEC provided Dean Breslin with a set of procedures to follow to constitute the Chairs Advisory Group.

--The FEC chair participated in a working group that met throughout the year to develop the new Article X of the *Faculty Handbook* (this group comprised VPAA Susan Kress, Barbara Krause, CAPT chair Greg Pfitzer, and CAFR chair Grace Burton). The new Article X, "Discipline and Dismissal of Faculty," was presented to and approved by the Faculty in spring 2012.

Throughout the process, the FEC chair brought the work back to the committee for its collective wisdom. FEC drafted the new *Faculty Handbook* language pertaining to the FAB that was necessary in light of the faculty's endorsement of the new Article X.

This same working group also conducted a review of Part Six of the *Faculty Handbook*. The FEC chair's particular role in this review was to interview past members of the Faculty Advisory Board regarding the quality of training and the effectiveness of procedures in cases individual FAB members had been involved with.

--The FEC chair participated in a second working group; this one was focused on developing procedures for the development and approval of policies at the college. This group included VPAA Susan Kress, Barbara Krause, IPPC vice chair Denise Smith, Dean Rochelle Calhoun, and Barbara Beck from HR. At the appropriate moment, CAFR was consulted, and SGA feedback was also requested. The 2011-2012 academic year ended as the group finished its final

working draft of the “Policy on the Development and Modification of College Policies.” Work on disseminating that draft policy and getting faculty feedback will commence in the fall.

--The FEC chair attended one meeting with Susan Kress, Beau Breslin, and Faculty Assessment Coordinator Sarah Goodwin to discuss the fate of the Assessment Steering Committee, which is currently a subcommittee of CEPP.

### **Elections (\*\*and a few governance updates):**

In addition to its standard four rounds, FEC ran several special WTSs throughout the year: one, in September, for the sixth-year review of a librarian; one for a CEPP subcommittee on scientific literacy; one, at the request of the VPAA, for a “faculty member at large” for the Science Facilities Task Force (SFTF);\* and finally, at the request of the President, a WTS for the DOF/VPAA Search Committee.

\*(For the SFTF, the remaining faculty members were recommended to the VPAA by the Science Working Group. These names, along with the rationales for these choices, were run by FEC.)

To our regular Round III, FEC added some slots, first helping CEPP and the CC to populate a CEPP-CC joint sub-committee on course caps and then assisting the VPAA in appointing three faculty members to a newly formed Intellectual Property Policy Working Group (IPPWG). At the start of the year, FEC provided President Glotzbach with a few names from which to select a member for an advisory group to counsel him on the reconfiguration of leadership in Academic Affairs.

In all, these rounds and these special WTSs filled 49 positions on committees, subcommittees, and working groups.

\*\*The Science Facilities Task Force, which had planned to finish its work by the end of this semester, has asked to continue through next year.

\*\*The Subcommittee on Responsible Citizenship (SRC) is a new subcommittee of IPPC; it began its work mid-year after IPPC consulted with FEC and a WTS was held to determine its faculty membership. Last year, it had been the suggestion of the Responsible Citizenship Task Force, which sunsetted in April 2011, that a standing subcommittee of IPPC be formed in its place. In consulting with FEC this year, IPPC received FEC’s concerns about this new standing subcommittee. With an eye to streamlined and effective governance, FEC wondered if this work is already being done elsewhere—by the AVD director and the AVD civic fellows as well as numerous personnel in the Dean of Students and the Dean of Studies offices working on the cluster of initiatives variously called high impact, service learning, internships, and citizenships. FEC questioned whether the SRC might result in the circumvention of CEPP as the central educational policy and planning committee (CEPP did not share this concern). Finally, it was FEC’s last concern that the two new subcommittees—SRC and CIGU—represent different sorts of subcommittees from the traditional IPPC subcommittees that focus on operational concerns like budget, admissions, and financial aid rather than agenda-driven issues. IPPC listened to our

concerns but decided to move ahead with the SRC (they have the power to form their own subcommittees).

\*\*CIGU, another subcommittee of IPPC, took the year to reconsider its charge and membership.

\*\*FEC dealt with the resignations of two of its own members, Reg Lilly and Ben Givan. FEC is grateful that Natalie Taylor and April Bernard stepped in to finish out these terms.

### **Major agenda items for the year:**

--Functional, effective governance. There were two shared governance meetings at the beginning of the academic year. Those in the room—chairs of IPPC, CAPT, CEPP, CC, CAS, the President, the VPAA, the DOF, the Dean of Students, and Barbara Krause—agreed that such a meeting should occur annually, in order to strengthen both governance and communication, which, of course, go hand in hand.

--Functional, clear communication among committees and between faculty and administration.

--Standardized process for the development of policy at the college.

--Improvements to Faculty Meeting structure. In the fall, FEC invited faculty to respond to a brief survey on Faculty Meetings. We met with both the Dean of the Faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. We received and reviewed two proposals from faculty to restructure the meetings, and we studied past FEC and CFG efforts to revise the meeting structure. We also invited Professor Susan Walzer to speak to us on faculty culture at Skidmore. On March 2, 2012, FEC held an open forum as the final step in preparing its motion about Faculty Meetings.

--Effective working relationship with CEPP and IPPC. Toward this end, the FEC chair and CEPP chair Josh Ness met late in the summer and early in the fall to build a strong working relationship. Perhaps because of CEPP's own very full agenda this year, FEC and CEPP ended up not working together extensively this year; however, interactions were extremely cordial and civil. The FEC chair and Barbara Krause were in communication starting in the summer months to review IPPC subcommittees. Then, during the year, the IPPC vice chair and FEC chair met on a regular basis to ensure communication between the committees. FEC participated in a pilot program that had the FEC chair sitting on IPPC as an invited guest; FEC asked that the chair be a silent observer, much in the way FEC operates in the Board meetings. IPPC finished its year's business by inviting the FEC chair to be a permanent member of IPPC. FEC is grateful for the invitation and will discuss the benefits and complexities of such an arrangement at the start of its fall work. If this were to become a regular arrangement, it would come to the floor of the Faculty Meeting.

### **Assessment of the year in governance:**

In sum, FEC believes that academic year 2011-2012 was a strong and effective year for faculty governance.

FEC continues to be concerned about the proliferation of working groups and task forces in terms of faculty workload. It seems increasingly the case that these small groups that lie outside faculty governance may fly under the radar, may ask the faculty to do too much, and may compete with standing committees at the college for faculty commitment. The work done outside of the committee system is not as transparent as that which is done through the regular governance process. Additionally, working groups are not necessarily representative of the faculty; a faculty member's presence does not constitute representation. Rather, it is the means by which the member arrives on a committee (election or appointment by FEC, which occurs in some instances in consultation with others) that gives that person the confidence of the faculty. And, finally, a working group may possibly usurp the authority of a standing committee. FEC understands that many of these small groups are motivated by the culture of consultation that faculty themselves often find highly desirable and valuable. However, this proliferation of working groups and task forces does raise legitimate concerns, as outlined here.

Good will and good intentions characterized much of the 2011-2012 academic year. At the October 7 Faculty Meeting, President Glotzbach honored FEC's request, made last spring, to discuss the Arthur Vining Davis grant. That began the year of multiple Committee of the Whole discussions that included an October discussion of the CIGU recommendations on inclusivity/diversity at Skidmore and, at the December meeting, the Intellectual Property Policy draft, and—in the spring—the Political Activity Policy draft. Throughout the year, a shared, community-wide commitment to good communication seemed apparent to the committee. FEC heard from many members of the community that the Committee of the Whole discussions at the Faculty Meetings were welcomed and productive. FEC hopes that the new measures put in place by its motion to the Faculty Meeting by-laws will continue to strengthen the Faculty Meeting as a space for robust deliberation and democratic governance.

On a few occasions throughout the year, several faculty had come to FEC expressing concern about policies in development—particularly the Intellectual Property policy and the Standards of Business Conduct policy. FEC felt that it responded to these concerns—by holding Committee of the Whole discussions, by communicating faculty concerns to appropriate individuals and/or groups, and by working on the “Policy on the Development and Modification of College Policies.” FEC feels that good work is under way on standardizing the process by which policies at the college are developed and vetted. This work will—as indicated above—resume in the fall. It remains a top agenda item for FEC going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

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