

FEC annual report, 2013-2014

The 2013-2014 academic year was a demanding but productive one for the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC). Relations with other committees and the administration were excellent. What follows is a report of our committee work, beginning with a quick enumeration of routine matters that FEC oversees, followed by year-specific matters and, finally, a summary of the state of affairs in the process of faculty governance reform.

Routine Work:

1. FEC held four rounds of elections, at their regular times, and three special WTS this year. FEC wishes to thank Sue Blair in the Dean's office and Jeff Clark in IT for their indispensable assistance.

Round I, 9/30-10/4 (Paul Sattler)

Round II, 12/2-12/6 (Silvia Carli)

Round III, 2/24-2/2 (Ting Li)

Round IV, 4/14-4/18 (Mehmet Odekon)

Special WTS: The first one was launched on September 9 to fill a vacancy on CEPP. The second one was started on October 7 to populate a Review Committee for the Dean of Students/Vice President of Student Affairs (requested by the President). The third one was launched on November 5 to populate the Middle States Steering Committee (requested by the DOF/VPAA). (The three special WTS were run by Joerg Bibow.)

Counting all elected and appointed positions, elections for the year filled a total of 75 slots on committees, subcommittees, and working groups. The updated committee membership lists for 2014-15 are here: <http://www.skidmore.edu/dof-vpaa/committees/14-15/index.php>

2. FEC observed the two on-campus Board of Trustee meetings: 10/24-25 and 5/15-16. The observer notes have been sent to the faculty and are also posted on the FEC website.

3. The FEC chair regularly attended IPPC meetings.

4. The FEC chair or members attended the Academic Affairs retreats hosted by the DOF/VPAA.

5. The FEC chair and members attended a Chairs and Program Directors meeting hosted by the FWVG regarding their work on FHB language

6. The FEC chair participated in the Shared Governance meeting on October 15, 2013, the purpose of which is to allow committee chairs and administrators to share their agenda for the year.

7. FEC held two Committee of Committees meetings: 12/12/13 and 4/17/14. Generally speaking, committees reported good relations.

8. The FEC chair held a meeting with the SGA President.
9. FEC has reviewed and approved the Faculty Meeting dates for academic year 2014-2015, with a particular eye to any scheduling conflicts due to religious holidays.
10. FEC coordinated with Debbie Peterson in the Dean's Office regarding housekeeping changes for the 2014-2015 FHB, which will be reviewed and approved by the Faculty in the fall.
11. FEC's web author, Paul Sattler, has maintained updated information on the governance website overseen by FEC.

Year-Specific Work:

1. FEC continued to work closely with Beau Breslin in shaping the agenda for Faculty Meetings following the reformed format featuring briefer reports but more extended time for discussion, specifically in the regular Committee of the Whole discussions. Three were held this year (CEPP: General Education curriculum review in October, FWVG: FHB language regarding tenure and promotion in November, FEC: Governance Reform in April).
2. FEC co-sponsored with the President and the DOF/VPAA the Academic Summit on January, 17, 2014. The themes of the Summit (General Education curriculum, shared governance, marrying the co-curriculum to the curriculum, Strategic Plan, blended learning, the promise of higher education) were determined by suggestions from members of the community.
3. FEC provided a White Paper for the new Strategic Plan.
4. The FEC chair met with Beau Breslin and communicated with Andy Camp (IT) in order to improve the governance website(s).
5. The FEC chair participated in a meeting regarding Middle States re-accreditation.
6. FEC was consulted in the following matters:
 - formation of an ad hoc working group to shape and shepherd the establishment of an Institute for the chronicling and telling of current, near-term, and historical events/stories with a focus on documentary film and oral history (Documentary Studies Center), funded by an outside donor.
 - use of a pilot volunteer approach instead of involving FAB regarding procedures that govern the response to disruptive student behavior.
 - MALS restructuring (Jacquie Scoones was invited to attend a FEC meeting for this purpose).
 - establishment of a self-study steering committee regarding Middle States re-accreditation.
 - population of the Chair's Advisory Group.

- Mellon Grant opportunity (Presidential Leadership Program) for the formation of a new Center for Leadership in Teaching and Learning. (DOF/VPAA Beau Breslin was invited to attend a FEC meeting for this purpose.)

7. The FEC chair met and communicated with FWWG chair to coordinate on the “service” interpretation as part of the expectations for tenure and promotion.

8. In the spring semester FEC invited representatives from the FWWG for extra meetings (on a weekly basis) on governance reform.

Motions and Resolutions from the Year:

Motion to adopt the 2013-2014 Faculty Handbook (September Faculty Meeting)

Motion to update “Division of Disciplines” (September Faculty Meeting)

Motion on academic responsibilities of faculty* (October Faculty Meeting)

Resolution – Honoring Phil and Marie Glotzbach’s Service (November Faculty Meeting)

Motion Intellectual Property (May Faculty Meeting)

*In the previous academic year some departments had asked FEC to seek clarification of confusing FHB language regarding faculty responsibilities. The motion was tabled at the November Faculty Meeting after an alleged conflict between the motion and the Faculty Meeting’s By-Laws had been asserted. As stated in the FEC minutes of November 13, FEC believes that no such conflict actually exists.

Update on Faculty Governance Reform:

A Committee of the Whole discussion on governance reform was held at the April 2013 Faculty Meeting, which was the culmination of FEC’s work on the matter in the previous year. FEC continued its work this year and believes to have made significant progress.

Based on the extensive comparative research undertaken in the fall semester, FEC first presented some preliminary ideas for governance reform at the Academic Summit in January, gathering important Faculty feedback through the discussions that took place there.

Following the Academic Summit, FEC invited representatives from the FWWG, which was working on some closely related issues, to join FEC in the governance reform endeavor.

The next step was the Committee of the Whole discussion held at the April 5, 2014, Faculty meeting (following the email that was sent out to the Faculty on March 28 outlining the governance reform proposal).

An open forum followed on April 11, which was attended by about 30 faculty members.

Finally, FEC also had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with the committee chairs at the Committee of Committees meeting on April 17.

Based on the feedback we received at these gatherings as well as from numerous individual faculty members FEC has made the following amendments to what we call the “Cycle-Council model,” specifically to the cycle, which stipulates a minimum faculty governance service contribution of three consecutive years during any 7-year sabbatical cycle of one’s career.

First, instead of generally serving in years 3-4-5 of their sabbatical cycle, faculty will be able to choose serving any three consecutive years of their sabbatical cycle. This gives maximum freedom to Faculty in determining the time of their service while maintaining another key advantage of the cycle: continuity of service on our core committees. We might need to balance this freedom with a safeguard in case randomizing the cycle process should lead to very uneven service cohorts.

Second, regarding junior faculty, we propose a compromise between two conflicting goals. One objective is to integrate our junior faculty into the Skidmore community from the beginning. The other objective is to allow junior faculty to truly focus on teaching and scholarship at this critical stage in their career. And in view of the recently approved new Faculty Handbook language (“50-40-10”), it is our responsibility to make sure that they can do that. The compromise foresees that junior faculty will be expected to be available for one year of committee service during their third year. For instance, tenure-track faculty may serve on ad hoc committees, or as replacements for short-term committee vacancies, or even as *additional* members of our core governance committees. This experience will give them their first taste of faculty committee work as well as the opportunity to forge relations with their new colleagues. Junior faculty will then come up for their first full three-year service cycle either in years 7-8-9 or 8-9-10 – that is, after tenure is granted, but before their first post-tenure sabbatical in year 11. In this way, we make sure tenure-track faculty can focus on their primary responsibilities of teaching and scholarship at the pre-tenure stage of their career without facing any uncertainties regarding governance service expectations. In addition, we may expect our junior faculty to attend Council Meetings in their second and third years. In this way, we would foster their integration from the start and make sure their voices are heard.

Third, regarding our non-tenure-track colleagues, we propose language that emphasizes that they are an integral part of our faculty body. We propose to say that full-time non-tenure-track faculty “have the right and are welcome to volunteer participating in faculty governance.” They express their willingness to serve at the appropriate time as part of the process that establishes the pool of faculty who are up for service in the following year.

FEC’s governance reform proposal foresees inclusiveness, not exclusiveness. Faculty members can volunteer to do more governance service than the minimum governance service contribution that the cycle calls for.

Our Faculty Handbook calls for broad participation and workload sharing in governance. It also asks that those “qualified to serve on committees do so at appropriate times throughout their career” (Faculty Handbook, p. 201). Our current system does not deliver on that. For instance, in more than 50 percent of cases this year we had only one volunteer per open spot, hence our “elections” are no true elections. Worse, on a number of occasions we were unable to fill open spots, forcing us to extend deadlines or carry vacant spots forward to the next round. This was not an untypical year.

The proposed system assures broad participation and governance service sharing, including fair workload sharing across faculty generations, while leaving a maximum of freedom for faculty to choose from governance service options based on stipulated minimum expectations for governance service, including the timing of their service. In addition, the proposed system assures continuity of committee membership. The point is that the privilege of faculty self-governance comes along with a responsibility: the responsibility to be part of it and make it work. The cycle/council proposal is designed to tackle long-standing faculty concerns about equity and effectiveness of our faculty self-governance system.

FEC believes that we will be ready to vote on the cycle/council proposal in the coming fall semester. If it is approved, we would have the first committee election based on the new governance model in the fall of 2015, and the new system would then become fully operative in the academic year 2016-17.

While we can make the cycle/council work on the basis of our current committee structure, ideally, we believe that we should also restructure and streamline our committee system. Committee restructuring with a view of enhancing its efficiency will be the focus of next year’s reform work. If it turns out that more time is required to complete the task, the new system could be launched a year later. In any case, this work will be undertaken in close collaboration with the committees, and, as always, FEC continues to welcome faculty feedback as the governance reform process moves along – aiming at reforming the ways in which we, the faculty, govern ourselves.

FEC thanks everyone involved in this process for their generous and constructive feedback.

Two members of FEC – Joerg Bibow from the Department of Economics and Paul Sattler from the (Studio) Arts Department – have finished their terms of service, while two new members – Susannah Mintz from the English Department (as one-year sabbatical replacement for Denise Smith from the Health and Exercise Sciences Department) and Patti Murray Steinberger from the Biology Department – will be joining FEC in the fall. Mehmet Odekon of Economics has agreed to be chair this year.

The members of the Faculty Executive Committee wish to thank all their colleagues who participated this year in shared governance.

Respectfully submitted,

Joerg Bibow (chair), Silvia Carli, Ting Li, Mehmet Odekon, and Paul Sattler