

Committee of Committees Meeting
December 5, 2007
Faculty-Staff Club
4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

The Faculty Executive Committee is charged with convening the Committee of Committees (CoC), which comprises faculty members of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC), the Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure (CAPT), the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR), the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP), the Curriculum Committee (CC), the Faculty Development Committee (FDC), Athletic Council (AC), and any current ad hoc committees whose presence FEC believes would be helpful. The CoC convenes at least twice a year to assess the interactions among committees and between committees and the administration, and to discuss ongoing issues (problems or successes) in committee operations.

The first CoC meeting of AY 2007/8 took place on Wednesday, December 5, from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. Members from all of the above named committees were present, with the addition of a faculty representative on the Scribner Village Study Group (SVSG), who asked to be present at the beginning of the meeting to report.

What follow are notes on the meeting. A condensed version of a committee's report is given first, followed by a synopsis of reactions to and discussion of that report, where applicable. The order of reports is the order in which they were actually given. The purpose of these minutes is to make faculty and administration aware of concerns within the governance structure, and of observations on college operations by members of standing committees.

Furthermore, FEC will share these minutes with appropriate members of the Administration as a courtesy. The Administration has the option to respond in a separate document, which will be made available on the FEC website.

1. Scribner Village Study Group (SVSG).

Report. A faculty representative from the SVSG reported on that group's activities since April of 2007. The representative noted that little progress has been made since Fred DiMauro's departure, and that there have been no meetings of the SVSG since the summer, and few communications. The faculty rep. was especially concerned about sustainability issues (which are why the faculty member agreed to serve on the SG) and their apparent low priority in the Scribner Village project.

Discussion. The CoC affirmed that sustainability issues are legitimate faculty concerns. There was also concern expressed about use of faculty time when serving on task forces and other ad hoc groups. The Chair of FEC noted that FEC generally requests charges, sunset dates, and final reports as it learns about the formation of ad hoc groups.

2. CAPT.

Report. CAPT has had good relations with the Administration this term, and is carrying on with its work regarding tenure considerations.

3. CAFR.

CAFR reported no concerns.

4. AC.

Report. AC has been meeting once every two weeks and is functioning well. There have been two fact-finding field trips to the Boathouse and the Stables. Both facilities are in need of significant upgrades; the former is, in a word, “pitiful.” AC plans to write a document (like a white paper) about this situation and how it might be improved. The Council hopes to bring faculty and coaches together this year under the assumption that these two groups of people have much in common, yet don’t know each other well and could learn something from each other; a bridge-building event featuring Jeff Segrave (specifics to be determined, but something in the spirit of a pedagogy workshop) is scheduled for Friday, February 8. Finally, AC has revised its PA instructor procedures and is currently conducting a review of the five most recently hired PA instructors, all of whom are coaches.

5. CC.

Report. CC enjoys good relations with the Administration, with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (ADOF) sitting on the Committee. Mark Hofmann has been reviewing materials carefully and in a timely manner for administrative concerns (such as costs and staffing) before sending them on to us. In addition, the deep knowledge and understanding of the curriculum that the Dean of Studies (DOS) possesses clearly enhances and advances discussions and deliberations, without pre-empting any of the voices or concerns of other members of the committee. One qualification: CC sent out a preliminary report on a new minor last week and has yet to receive an acknowledgement of receipt from the Dean of the Faculty (DOF). CC is observing revisions to many departments’/programs’ curricula (Economics, Biology, American Studies, International Affairs), which are designed to strengthen course offerings, make them more challenging (especially in terms of course prerequisites), and to provide stronger foundations in the disciplines. The question of course enrollment caps continues to be a source of contention (to be dramatic) when departments submit new courses. It may be worthwhile at some point to revisit this policy and formally seek its endorsement from CEPP and/or the Faculty. CC anticipates reviewing approximately twenty new Scribner Seminar proposals (reviewed first by the Director of the FYE) in the spring. Finally, faculty have been generally receptive to the recommendations of CC and easy to work with this fall.

Discussion. There was support in the room for revisiting enrollment caps.

6. CEPP.

Report. A busy semester. CEPP has received the report of the Assessment Task Force, formed by the former Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), and is deliberating on how best to respond. CEPP has also been considering the nascent Center for Teaching and Learning, and how to expand the discussion of this enterprise (e.g., involving FDC and IT, among others). The current VPAA called a meeting the day before, which was constructive, but questions of how to proceed prevail. Should a task force be created, for example? CEPP has moved the separation of Art and Art History, held an open forum, and will call for a vote at the next Faculty Meeting. CEPP has discussed the report of the Special Programs Study Group (SPSG), and hopes to make recommendations to the Dean of Special Programs (DOSP) before the end of the year. The CEPP Advisory Committee on International Study (ACIS) and the subcommittee to study the offices of the DOS and Student Academic Services (SAS) are continuing with their work. CEPP has also considered the Optimization Plan, as well as policy on Academic Grievances and on FYE Failure/Withdrawals/Transfers (the latter from CAS). Relations with the Administration have been good, though some faculty members of CEPP have expressed concern about the strong presence of administrators, who have frequently visited CEPP this term; at the same time, these administrators have not overshadowed the Committee's work.

Discussion.

- The issue of whether the VPAA sits on CEPP, either with or in place of the DOF, remains ongoing. CEPP hopes to consider this issue, as well as the presence of the DOSP (which is twice proposed in the SPSG's Report), at its retreat in January.
- With regard to teaching and learning, it is clear that assessment is a related, but separate issue; and perhaps even one of lesser importance overall, though still useful. The Faculty are probably more concerned with the Center itself: what it is, how it operates, and its resource implications. It should be noted, however, that CEPP in 2001, following the overhaul of the all-College curriculum, recommended that the Faculty figure out how assessment should work: the enterprise has many drivers.

7. FDC.

Report. FDC is pleased to report an increase in this year's Operating Budget, allowing a potential increase in the number of proposals funded this year. In response to the CoC's suggestion last spring, and with the help of the DOF and Sponsored Research Officer (SRO) Bill Tomlinson, FDC conducted a survey of the NE Deans regarding travel-to-read support at our peer and aspirant institutions; based on its findings, FDC made a recommendation to the DOF to increase travel-to-read/represent for inclusion in the budget cycle next year. FDC also submitted a proposal to establish a budget line in the DOF Operating Budget for sabbatical enhancement as we move toward the possibility of 80% sabbatical support. As begun last year, consultation with the VPAA and DOF regarding sabbatical proposals continues this year. The SRO, at the CoC's suggestion, joins in discussion of FDC proposals, allowing him to learn quickly about faculty projects that involve research and/or teaching innovations. The online process for Moseley nominations worked well this year. Summer Research Programs guidelines are being

revised to provide flexibility to the kinds of projects that can be supported. The addition of Jill Jones as support staff has made a real difference in terms of facilitating FDC's work.

8. IPPC.

Report. Agenda items discussed to date at IPPC include: *Faculty Handbook* Part Six; retirees' health care benefits (with more work left to do); implementation of optimization; the SPSG Report; and several Campus Environment Committee (CEC) issues (including Focus the Nation, the North Woods Summer Stewards' Report, the Sustainability Coordinator position, and the CEC agenda for 2007/8). Yet to be discussed are the sunset and replacement for the Intercultural and Global Understanding Task Force (the President will bring a proposal forward); academic planning (analogous to strategic and facilities planning); facilities planning (the condition of the Boathouse seems to be on the radar), and the FY 2009 budget. The meetings have been cordial, though progress on some fronts (such as the budgets) has been slow; retirees' benefits are a huge undertaking.

9. FEC.

Report. FEC has met with Mike West and asked that the process for examining retirees' benefits be as transparent as possible; Mike has made it clear that he believes faculty input should come through the Budget and Finance subcommittee of IPPC, hence Mark Huibregtse's call for feedback at the last Faculty Meeting (which has garnered about 10 responses). The Chair of FEC has been working on *Handbook* Part Six with the Chairs of CAPT and CAFR, the VPAA and DOF, Barbara Krause, and members of Human Resources. The progress has been slow, but the discussions robust and fair. The Part Six working group has decided to postpone presenting Part Six until February, the better to accommodate an open Forum; the group hopes that the document will be protective of everyone's rights. Finally, FEC has been very concerned with service this term, as elections and appointments, both public and behind the scenes, have taken up much of the Committee's time. Last year's FEC decided to gather quantitative data on service; this year's FEC has opted to pursue gathering qualitative data, from meeting with Susan Walzer (who has been conducting qualitative research in this area) to issuing its own survey about how service is valued at Skidmore. Our survey may provide both quantitative and qualitative data.

Discussion. A brief but wide-ranging discussion ensued about service at the College. In the end there was general agreement that there has been a cultural shift, partly due to the criteria for tenure and promotion, and partly generational, in how the Faculty understand and undertake service (though junior faculty at the College are still pulling their weight on committees). There was also support for a Faculty Caucus on the issue of service, though some wondered who would attend such a meeting apart from those already in the room.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Curley
Chair, Faculty Executive Committee
dcurley@skidmore.edu