

Committee of Committees Meeting
May 3, 2007
Faculty-Staff Club
3:30 – 5:00 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), the 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 second CoC meeting of AY 2006-2007 took place on Thursday, May 3, from 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. Members from all of the above-named committees were present.

What follows are minutes of the meeting. A condensed version of a committee's report is given first; there follows a synopsis of reactions to and discussion of that report where applicable, with some questions or comments identified as coming from a certain committee where appropriate. The order of reports is the order in which they were actually given. The purpose of these minutes is to make the Faculty and the Administration aware of concerns within the faculty governance structure, and of observations on College operations by members of standing committees.

Furthermore, as it has in previous years, FEC has shared these minutes with appropriate members of the Administration as a courtesy. The Administration has the option to respond in a separate document, which will also be made available via the FEC website.

1. Athletic Council (AC).

Report. Following the move of athletics from Academic Affairs to Student Affairs, both physical activity courses that bear credit and their instructors require evaluation. AC developed an evaluation plan, approved by CEPP, that will start with the newest coaches hired, and that will see all coaches reviewed every three years. Faculty on the AC have put academics front and center. The Director of Athletics has consistently kept the College's academic mission in view, while the working relationship with the Dean of Studies, who provides an interface with the students, has been excellent. AC has sent new *Faculty Handbook* language to FEC, which has been approved. Overall, a good, productive year.

Discussion.

- **Q.:** Has there been any reconsideration of whether Physical Activity courses should be credited? **A.:** Yes, the topic has come up, and discussions with CEPP are ongoing.
- **Comment:** Originally, PA courses received credit only for the academic parts of them.

2. Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR).

Report. CAFR's communication with the administration has been improving somewhat, though there have been difficult moments, with miscommunications on both sides; there seems to be a divide between the Faculty and the Administration. CAFR has been acting in good faith and understands that the Administration believes it has been acting in good faith. Certain procedures in the *Faculty Handbook* are ill-defined, and the Administration would agree. CAFR hopes that, if and when a complete overhauling of the *Handbook* occurs, the input of the Faculty on these changes will be significant. Pending the nature and outcome of these revisions, CAFR worries that, based upon the committee's experience this year, it will not be able to function as it has in the past.

Discussion.

- **Q.:** Why does CAFR feel this way? **A.:** The Administration has made decisions about the Committee having access to information.
- **Q.:** It is disturbing that CAFR feels it cannot do its work. If CAFR cannot function as it has, what can the Faculty do? **A.:** Unknown, but CAFR will certainly be less effective.
- **Q.:** Are documents being withheld from CAFR? **A.:** Yes; we cannot say more, but this is why we are concerned.
- **Q. (from FEC, playing devil's advocate):** CAFR had a meeting about the issue of withheld documents with the President, the VPAA, Barbara Beck, and Barbara Krause. Was the outcome of the meeting satisfactory? **A.:** Yes, and no. The Administration made its case, but CAFR was still denied access, and was told that in future cases access might also be restricted.
- **Q.:** Is it your sense that this resistance is coming from the Administration or the courts? **A.:** The College's lawyer is involved. CAFR was told this owes to changes in the legal climate.
- **Q. (from FEC):** A "complete overhauling" of the *Handbook*? This is news to us. **A. (from FEC):** The changes to Part One, Article X and to Part Six could at least be defined as substantial. Susan has certainly discussed substantial changes with FEC.
- **Q. (from CAPT):** CAPT has noticed inconsistencies in the *Handbook*, but surely these are editorial matters and unworthy of a "complete overhaul"? And hopefully an overhauling of the *Handbook* will not occur next year? **A. (from FEC):** Yes, there are editorial matters, but they are pervasive. FEC's current position is that the Committee wishes to be the primary conduit through which any major revisions to the *Handbook* are made. We (meaning FEC among itself, as well as FEC in consultation with members of the Administration) haven't yet decided on the best model for how this enterprise might be undertaken; one approach might be a subcommittee of FEC,

augmented by representatives of other important committees, and joined by members of the Administration. Regarding Part 6, FEC is aware that some work will need to be done over the summer, especially if FEC is to present the *Handbook* to the Faculty in the fall. FEC hopes to have the *Handbook* ready to present by the September faculty meeting; this version could be considered a benchmark, from which any larger efforts would proceed. And, yes, a start on revising the *Handbook* seems likely for next year.

3. Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure (CAPT).

Report. CAPT had a light load of tenure and promotion cases, but a heavy load of changes to the *Handbook*: reporting structures in tenure and promotion cases; tenure-track ID lines; proportional and factional lines. The Committee has had good interactions with CEPP, FEC, and CAFR, and also with the Administration, which has consulted with CAPT frequently on various issues.

4. Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP).

Report. A productive year for CEPP, with seven successful motions brought to the faculty floor. Perhaps the most important were the writing proposal, and those on tenure-track ID and proportional lines. The presence of the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Student Affairs has been beneficial. CEPP is aware that the Vice President for Academic Affairs would like to sit on CEPP, but the Committee finds the presence of the DoF more logical. Work next year will include an study of a possible satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading system for all internships (instead of the current letter-grading of them), possible consideration of the grading of Physical Activity courses, and an evaluation of the restructuring of the Office of the Dean of Studies, which FEC had requested be done after two years.

Discussion.

- **Q:** Has CEPP been approached regarding the proposed merging of the Periclean Honor Society into the Honors Forum? **A.:** No.
- **Q:** Can CEPP offer an update on the recently-passed writing proposal? **A.:** Discussions since the vote indicate that CEPP is much less important to the implementation of the proposal, which will be the purview of the new Writing Director.
- **Q:** Will CEPP alter the proposal, given the close vote? **A.:** No.
- **Q:** Given that there has not yet been a vote on the implementation of the proposal, it is conceivable that such a vote at a subsequent meeting might fail. What would happen then? **A.:** The motion to implement would keep getting made; hopefully it would eventually pass.
- **Comment** (from FEC): The Parliamentarian asked FEC to consider proposing an amendment to the *Handbook* that would require a 2/3 supermajority to change educational policy. FEC considered this suggestion, but did not act on it, noting that

there is already an ad-hoc provision for a supermajority in our meeting by-laws. A supermajority may well be requested for votes on implementation of the writing proposal's recommendations.

- **Q.:** Does CEPP discuss the fact that the College is moving down in the *US News and World Report* rankings? **A.:** Yes, but never as a formal agenda item. The College knew it would go down in the rankings, but also expects to go up next year. Perhaps poor alumni involvement, a national trend, is responsible for the College's drop this year. Nevertheless, since the *US News* rankings are based on comparative statistics, a national trend might not explain our (comparative) fall in the rankings.

5. Curriculum Committee (CC).

Report. Interactions with the Administration, particularly the Dean of Studies, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, and the Registrar, have been very efficient. The Committee met weekly, its most intensive work revolving around the Scribner Seminars, changes to honors and major requirements in departments and programs, and expansions to the curriculum at large. One recent trend has been proposals to increase GPA requirements (Management and Business's increase of its honors requirement to 3.6 was approved; SDM Committee's raising of minimum eligibility to 3.33 was deferred at CEPP's request). CC is concerned about the fourth credit hour of the Scribner Seminars, and hopes to talk more with FYE personnel. Furthermore, there is confusion among faculty as to which courses meet all-College requirements.

Discussion.

- **Q.:** Are the guidelines for meeting all-College requirements readily available? **A.:** Yes, the information is available online.
- **Q. (from CEPP):** Did CC invite the current FYE Director, Michael Arnush, to speak about the fourth credit hour? His views would have been helpful. **A.:** No, but CC did see his and the FYE readers' comments on the Scribner Seminar proposals, and in many cases CC's comments echoed theirs.
- **Q.:** Might CC collaborate with FYE on a pedagogy workshop on using the fourth hour? **A.:** Possibly. However, any such workshops have already been undertaken by FYE for its new faculty.
- **Comment:** Faculty do want consistent policies about how the fourth hour is to be used.
- **Q. (from FEC):** What will CC do next year, since only one person ran for CC in our latest round of elections, but there were two slots open? **A.:** CC will try to get by.
- **Q.:** Will CC be looking at the writing-enriched course proposals with a view to whether departments actually have the personnel to staff such courses? **A.:** We haven't discussed it, but we imagine so.

6. Faculty Development Committee (FDC).

Report. A great year, due in no small part to excellent staff support. FDC has produced its own internal Committee Handbook. The Committee's relationship with the Associate Dean of the Faculty is a fruitful one. FDC awarded 40 collaborative research grants this year, and worked closely with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Faculty to ensure a transparent process for funding sabbatical leaves; the Committee reviewed all applications for sabbatical funding, and all applicants received some degree of funding. The faculty on FDC submitted a proposal to the ADoF, the DoF, and the VPAA last week for a continuing budget line for sabbatical support (a copy of that proposal will be sent to FEC). The Committee believes that the newly hired Director of Sponsored Research should sit on FDC next year, but the Committee would like advice on how this might best be accomplished.

Discussion.

- **Comment** (from FEC): FDC can invite anyone to sit in an ex-officio (non-voting capacity), but should eventually make a motion to amend the *Handbook* to make the Director a permanent ex-officio member.
- **Q.:** Would FDC consider doing a comparative study on travel to read and represent at our peer institutions, and presenting its findings to the DoF and/or IPPC? The annual \$1000.00 does not go as far as it used to. **A.** Yes, although FDC does not review individual proposals for reading or representing.

7. Faculty Executive Committee (FEC).

Report. FEC worked with CAFR on its motion for *Handbook* Part One, Article X, offering comments on a draft, and providing fora for discussion both at a Faculty Caucus (to which FEC decided not to invite members of the Administration) and in a Committee of the Whole at a full faculty meeting (at which the Administration had an opportunity to share its views). FEC recognizes that the Vice President for Academic Affairs had asked that she and the Dean of the Faculty be invited to the Faculty Caucus, but the Committee ultimately felt that the interests of CAFR were better served at that moment by a faculty-only meeting. FEC solicited comments on a motion regarding faculty who hold administrative appointments from both CAPT and CAFR. The feedback FEC received indicates that we are not yet ready to bring the motion to the faculty; we nonetheless think that there is a clear line between faculty-administrators who sit on administrative staff (such as those of the DoF or the Dean of Special Programs), and those who do not; and we are only concerned with restricting faculty rights as they pertain to running for committees, voting in faculty elections, and attending Faculty Caucuses. FEC has made some headway in its Service Project, and is working closely with the VPAA and the DoF.

Discussion.

- **Q.:** Is FEC aware of how many ad hoc committees there are? **A.:** Yes; we are concerned about their proliferation, but we recognize the need of faculty to participate in the important work for which these groups are assembled. We ask the Administration to consult with us on the formation of any group, regardless of size; generally speaking, they do consult with us.

- **Q.:** What about the Space Committee announced a while back? **A.:** We don't know.
- **Comments:** The Vice President for Finance and Administration has yet to release a \$30,000.00 report on the Art Building to the Art Department. In the absence of a Space Committee, the VPFA seems to be making decisions about spatial resources that require faculty input.

7. Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC).

Report. IPPC has been functioning well. The Committee now has a website separate from the Strategic Planning site. An Operating Code has been written and approved. Agendas are composed carefully, and submitted reasonably far in advance of meetings. Communication with the Administration is good, and the FEC members who sit on IPPC are reporting to FEC on IPPC's work, and bringing FEC's concerns back to IPPC. The Vice Chair of IPPC submits a written report of the latest IPPC meeting to FEC prior to each FEC-9 meeting, which has helped a great deal with communication. The work IPPC has undertaken this year includes implementation of optimization; introduction of the Campus Master Plan to the community; preliminary consideration of changes to retirees' health benefits (community meetings will begin this fall, although one feels that the Trustees have handed down a mandate that such changes *will* happen; faculty might hope to influence only *how* they happen); review of the budget for the coming year, including major budgetary parameters, new initiatives, and capital projects; consideration of the stewardship of the North Woods; introduction of proposals to reduce paper usage on campus, including support of double-sided printing; consideration of Strategic Indicators or a "Dashboard" (to indicate to the Board and other constituencies how the College is doing); discussion of bias incident response protocols; discussion of revisions to Handbook Part 6; consideration of the Integrity Board ownership issue; and review of the Special Programs Study Group Charge.

Discussion.

- **Comment:** The Faculty must do its best to counter the wholesale sabotage of retirees' benefits. Do the Trustees expect the Faculty simply to accept this?
- **Comment** (from IPPC): Discussions of retirees' benefits will begin at the May 16 faculty meeting.
- **Comment:** On the specific matter of reduction of health care benefits, the Trustees seem to be emulating national trends and corporate practices — but these trends have proven wrong. Recent research has shown their negative impact on productivity and workplace environment.
- **Q.:** Are these changes a violation of our contracts? **A.:** Perhaps not, since provisions were made in the *Faculty Handbook* for possible changes to the retirement benefits for those hired after 1999. But others think they are a violation of contract, which includes the verbal agreements made by chairs and deans to faculty when they were first hired.
- **Q.:** Will the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Faculty speak on our behalf? **A. (from IPPC and FEC):** The President and the Vice President for Finance and Administration did fight for us at the February meetings.

- **Comment:** Perhaps we can encourage them to keep fighting for us.
- **Q.:** What kind changes are planned? **A.:** No firm plans yet, though the consensus seems to be some kind of cost-sharing. Another possibility is termination of the benefit for new hires.
- **Comment:** A likely argument will be that, since salaries have gone up, to keep them going up we will now have to give up something else.
- **Comment:** We must present a case with the previously-mentioned research in hand; perhaps the Trustees will understand a counter-argument based on productivity.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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