

Minutes of the Faculty Executive Committee  
Monday, November 17, 2008  
11:30 a.m.

Present: Lisa Aronson, John Brueggemann (Chair), Jennifer Delton, Pat Hilleren, Dan Hurwitz (scribe), Natalie Taylor, and guests John Berman, Giuseppi Faustini, Mary Lynn, Lawrence Opitz, Peter Stake, William Standish

- I. An extended discussion of the college service/governance problem (SGP) and its relation to personnel matters was conducted with a number of former CAPT(S) members. Among the points made and opinions expressed were the following:

To CAPTS, service is a “distant third” criterion, if not even a “fourth” after “teacher-scholarship”, especially in tenure cases. In tenure cases which are regarded as “weak” on the basis of the other two criteria, service can play a more important role. In promotion cases more careful attention is paid to service. Letters of recommendation based on serving together on committees can be very useful in personnel cases, especially with respect to promotion. And committee service can be valuable as a way to get to know colleagues, since being known can help future evaluation.

The definitions of “service” are many and varied. The role of departmental service as a part of a service profile is not well-defined at the College, with different department chairs putting different weights on this factor. It was doubted that the definitions of the other two criteria were clear, either. A general statement of service standards would be helpful. Moreover, it was agreed that different CAPTs have their own senses and personalities, and, therefore, their own standards. One participant stated that with respect to service, “you know it when you see it.”

The source of the SGP was considered. Some chairs seem to tell non-tenured faculty not to serve on committees. It was felt that the “faculty culture” no longer emphasizes the value of service. An extended history of the importance of service at Skidmore was offered. Two factors which were described as having had serious effects on service profiles were the joining of tenure to promotion to Associate Professor level and the pre-tenure sabbatical year, which can interrupt service patterns.

The relationship between type of committee service and career stage was analyzed. Some prefer more modest involvement before tenure, both in terms of amount and “intensity” of specific committee choice, followed by a “robust” post-tenure commitment.

Numerous possible remedies to the SGP were suggested. FEC itself is considering a reduction of the pure number of faculty committee slots, along

with a prioritization of governance centrality. A type of “big 6” – CAFR, CAPT, CEPP, Curriculum, FEC, IPPC, will be a starting point for discussion. Efforts from administrators and chairs to encourage more post-tenure service might help. A study of the form of annual reports, perhaps leading to revision, may have the effect of concentrating attention on types of service both for choice and evaluative purposes. It was mentioned that leadership and other types of quality measures of service do not come up on these reports.

The last topic was how FEC ought to continue with this effort. The CAPT, of course, already engages new candidates in discussions in which service is a component. Some felt that sessions beyond that would be useful. A meeting between FEC and chairs/program directors was one possibility, especially since the backgrounds and beliefs in this group vary so greatly. The “culture”, it was said, comes more from there than from CAPT.

After sincere thanks were offered by FEC for their participation, the guests departed.

## II. Round Two elections

The numbers of Willingness-to-Serve replies were examined, and it was decided to run Round Two.

## III. Handbook Access

It was decided that FEC has discussed the issues involved and made a decision to distribute hard copy to the Faculty. The Chair should send out another e-mail to that effect.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Hurwitz