

## **FEC Faculty-Only Meeting 2/15/19 Report**

FEC scheduled a faculty-only meeting for the spring 2019 semester.

Early in the semester the committee solicited suggestions for conversation from faculty, resulting in these main topics:

1. Is admin top heavy? Is there a diminishment in faculty because of different/more roles of admin, or have faculty simply relinquished their agency?
2. Divisions (who belongs in which one?)
3. Who's teaching FYS/who's advising?
4. Regularizing course releases for service
5. Current make-up of our faculty, with respect to category and years at Skidmore. Above all, how many "long-term non-tenure-track faculty" do we have? Is that number/proportion something the institution has arrived at purposefully? If not, would at least some of those positions make sense as tenure-track conversions?
6. The (potential) unintended consequences of recording and exhaustively documenting faculty meetings.

FEC also consulted a half a dozen senior faculty with administrative experience, asking them specifically about the concern about "administrative bloat" and a corresponding decline in faculty power. FEC asked: You have a long history at Skidmore, one that often includes administrative roles. Do you think that we have experienced administrative bloat? Can you provide specific examples that either support or challenge this assumption?

This is the summary of responses with questions (in italics) posed by FEC to at least 100 people attending the faculty-only meeting.

1. Yes there has been an increase in middle-management/staff, generally for good reasons (to follow government regulations, etc.). Most respondents did not see this development as having an effect on faculty agency. *Do these appointments affect faculty agency?*
2. There has been an expansion of VPs. *What effect does this have on faculty agency?*
3. *What do we mean by faculty agency? Depending on the definition, might have we seen an increase?*
4. Respondents generally agreed that faculty have withdrawn from administrative work; overall they did not see this as a direct result of any increase in administration. *Why have faculty retreated from administrative service? Should faculty try to reengage?*

## **Notes from 2/15/19 faculty-only meeting that capture the most common comments**

AN OVERALL CONCERN ABOUT A LACK OF TRANSPARENCY FROM ADMINISTRATION, AROUND FINANCIAL ISSUES, COURSE RELEASES, AND MORE. (FEC has raised this issue with DOF/VPAA Orr; he is aware of faculty sentiment.)

### **SERVICE**

Why are we pulling back on governance?

- structural issues
- cultural zeitgeist (in part due to move towards individual focus)
- increased pressure on scholarly production
- protectionist stance towards junior faculty
- apathy – work that goes unnoted
- perceived lack of trust (from admin) re our ability to reason about key issues like finances, staffing. A focus on expertise/hierarchy at the expense of a diversity of viewpoints.

A consideration of what we mean by “service”; different types (college committee, search committee, departmental) seem to generate different emotions in people, with some finding the college committees, which can feel like rubber stamp committees, the least satisfying and generate burnout and withdrawal. Also some committees make recommendations to the president that seem to get overturned frequently, so why bother?

There should be two paths to full professor – one based on service, the other on scholarship. If we don't value service for promotion then it creates a sense of disaffection around it. Now service is professionally costly.

Count ALL service as service including core work falling disproportionately to some faculty/ Work is not evenly distributed.

New and junior faculty should have a more explicit invitation/welcome/entry ramp to faculty governance and committees of interest/passion; it's a good intention to protect new faculty but it may have adverse consequences for participatory involvement./ “Protecting” junior faculty from service is not good for the junior faculty or college.

Some see more admin work at dept level.

Compensation:

- Need adequate compensation for service/incentivize time-intensive committees
- How do other institutions count/measure/compensate service?
- Check in re compensation for chairs/directors
- Want transparency in compensation for service.
- Many want to serve and be more involved but don't want to be exploited.
- Need increased transparency (multiple times) – who gets what, when and why.

## **GOVERNANCE/ADMIN**

Multiple expressions of interest in a faculty senate.

Multiple expressions of interest in resuscitating the faculty's presence at BOT meetings.

A sense of lack of agency in key decisions, like healthcare.

Should faculty (resume) go to AACU meetings?

Separate VPAA and DOFs?

Better contractual language and policies for long-term non-tenure-track faculty.

## **MISCELLANY**

Diminished sense of community (though not explored the increasing cost of living in Saratoga that has pushed faculty farther out, and more).

Non-tenure-track/long-term folks feel especially vulnerable. The college is not investing/showing commitment to them, so it's hard for them to step up and serve the college – there's no incentive to serve; people want to be valued.

If we want more agency what would that look like?

Feels that faculty lines are being added at a slower rate.

What does the leadership of the college envision for the composition of faculty in terms of:

-student/faculty ratio

-reliance on contingent faculty (teaching profs, VAPs, adjunct)

-what is faculty turnover – is what we/they want?

There's a perception that admin pits staff against faculty.

We liked this meeting format. We want more ways to engage with the Skidmore community.

What concrete steps will come from this meeting?