

FACULTY MEETING  
May 19, 2010

### Committee of Committees Report

As per our charge in the Faculty handbook, the Faculty Executive Committee recently convened the Committee of Committees (on Thursday, April 29). The following Committees were represented: CAPT, CEPP, CIGU, Curriculum Committee, FDC, FEC, and IPPC. These committees reported favorable relations with the administration and with one another. However, two areas of concern were brought up and discussed at some length.

First, some faculty expressed reservations about certain aspects of our faculty culture, which are related to faculty governance and which they believe are weakening. Skidmore has a tradition of informal interactions between faculty members, including those within or between departments and programs and those between junior and senior faculty. Such interactions may be spontaneous or organized, serious or light-hearted. There was widespread agreement that these interactions provide a valuable foundation for the institutional work of the College. If, indeed, this foundation is weakening, we hope faculty and administration will think seriously about ways to strengthen it again.

FEC reported a second concern. On behalf of several faculty who had contacted us, and on the basis of our own deliberations, FEC twice requested from the Dean of the Faculty deeper, broader communication between her and the faculty. These requests revolved around the anti-harassment workshops and the strategic deployment of tenure-track lines. As we reported to the Committee of Committees, we believe the communications which resulted from these requests could have been much richer and more timely, especially with regard to the faculty having the opportunity to pose questions and express their concerns.

What follows is a clarification of the concerns FEC had which led to the discussion at the Committee of Committee meeting: with respect to the issue of tenure-track lines, we recognize that there have been substantive conversations in the past about related issues, including those held in recent weeks between the Dean, Chairs, and Directors. We also acknowledge that Chairs and Directors have had an opportunity and responsibility to relay information to their respective Departments and programs. We do not know how effectively that channel of communication has functioned. Of course, we also understand and respect completely the authority of the Dean to make decisions about the deployment of tenure-track lines. However, we believe this process would have benefited and still would benefit from a full discussion involving the entire faculty before any serious changes in direction are adopted.

We say this because some faculty view the "Guidelines for TT Proposals" (from an email dated 4/23) as substantively different from existing parameters. For instance, departments previously seeking approval of tenure-track lines were almost never required to get another department or program to sign on for a joint appointment. Moreover, some believe that the number of joint appointments (between departments or between a department and a program) referred to in that document would be a significant shift that would greatly transform the composition of the faculty, significantly alter the norms around personnel decisions, and produce large curricular effects.

Unsurprisingly, scarce resources guarantee that not every department or program will get what it wants and finds it needs. However, we still believe a full discussion among the faculty about the pros and cons of moving in one direction or another could better inform the Dean and others in their ultimate decisions about staffing directions. We also believe that greater transparency in the process of articulating strategic guidelines for proposing and distributing lines would lead to greater support for those hiring decisions when they are eventually made. Such legitimacy would provide a more solid foundation for all the work of recruiting and evaluating personnel.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Hurwitz

The Faculty Executive Committee

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