

**A thought experiment: governance at Skidmore**  
**--from the Faculty Executive Committee, April 2013**

During the past three years, FEC has heard concerns from the faculty regarding workload issues. As we all know, our work at Skidmore is evaluated by three criteria: teaching, scholarship/creative productivity, and service. Though “service” is more broadly construed than “governance,” FEC—as the governance oversight committee—would like the faculty to think about how we do governance at Skidmore, a key part of our “service.” Regarding governance, the two particular concerns that FEC hears most often pertain to fairness and visibility. Do the faculty fairly share the workload of governance? And is this sort of service to the College visible, valued—and how does it factor into tenure and promotion decisions, and how much is expected of each of us? Indeed, FEC notes that these sorts of concerns are consistent with the national conversation about 21st-century faculty workload. In sum, what *is* the work of the faculty (noting that administration and faculty have important but distinct roles at the college)?

Such concerns prompted us, in January, to place “faculty work lives” on the agenda for the Academic Summit. That Summit has now led us to suggest this Committee of the Whole discussion on governance. What follows is a “thought experiment” that asks us to imagine other ways to govern at Skidmore. FEC has no horse in this race; indeed, the various members of FEC may have their favorites from the options below. And of course, these aren’t the only options. But we felt that such a document could help prompt and/or guide our discussion.

This discussion will give next year’s FEC a clearer sense of the faculty’s will and inclination for change (or not). This discussion might also aid the Faculty Workload Working Group in its work this summer. And FEC believes that having this discussion has value to us all, as it gauges our commitment to our current way of doing governance and imagines alternative governance models.

Here, then, are some options for governance at Skidmore:

**OPTION A: Keep the governance structure as is at Skidmore.**

**OPTION B: Keep the governance structure as is at Skidmore, but change the culture: So it is no longer the question as to whether you wish to serve, but that it is time to serve. This option would keep the automatic rotation into and out of service from OPTION E below, but not change our current committee structure.**

**OPTION C: Keep the governance structure largely as is at Skidmore, with some strategic streamlining. For example, the purview of the FAB could expand to include any of the following cases: a CAFR case, a tenure appeal, tenure review, a CAS-style review.**

**OPTION D: “The Pfitzer Plan”\*\*\***

The college would add language to employment contracts that states explicitly that faculty must teach 18-20 credit hours a year and must do some scholarship and some documented service. (This language is in the *Faculty Handbook*, of course, but not in our contracts.) Those in the pre-tenure category would need to demonstrate competency in all three traditional areas, but those in the post-tenure category who could not demonstrate anything in one or both of the latter two categories over a certain amount of time (perhaps 3 years) would need to compensate the college by teaching a 3-3 load for some designated time.

*\*\*This model was raised as a possibility by Greg Pfitzer, American Studies, at the January Academic Summit. FEC has Greg's permission to include this model here, which the committee hopes it has represented accurately.*

### **OPTION E: Faculty Senate**

A group of 40 (?) faculty, tenured and tenure-track, to carry out the service work essential to our institution.

Faculty would rotate in for 3 years of senate service, followed by 6 (?) years off. During the course of their career, faculty may ask for a maximum of 3 annual service exemptions, which they petition for from the DOF/VPAA. A faculty member can ask for no more than 2 exemptions in 2 consecutive years.

The first act of the senate would be to elect, by vote, two Senate Faculty Leaders. These would be faculty known for getting business done, who have the respect and admiration of their peers, and who can lead by influence as opposed to position. The Faculty Leaders would each receive a course release. Their first task would be to run the elections for the committees outlined below. Another of their tasks is to maintain the accuracy of the *Faculty Handbook*.

No department or program chair can serve in the Senate. Tenure-track faculty cannot serve in their first two years at the college. Their senate service rotation begins in their third year.

When sabbatical interrupts a faculty member's 3-year term, the faculty member completes his or her term upon return to teaching.

The Senate would meet on Friday afternoons, every other week or, possibly, once a month—not on the first Friday of each month when Faculty Meetings occur. Senate meetings would be run by the DOF/VPAA and the two Faculty Leaders. The Senate would have staff support for IT needs, agenda-setting, and minute-taking.

***The primary work of the Senate would be curriculum and personnel issues.***

Smaller committees comprising Senate members, determined via election, are the following:

--CAP, Committee on Appointments and Promotions—membership of 4 tenured + 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty Leader

--CT, Committee on Tenure—membership of 4 tenured + 2<sup>nd</sup> Faculty Leader

--CC, Committee on Curriculum—Division of Disciplines, 4 tenured or untenured

*{this smaller group completes the normal operations work of reviewing courses as well as shepherding the process of developing or eliminating majors, minors, programs}*

--FDC, Faculty Development—Division of Disciplines, 4 at least 2 tenured

--CSS, Committee on Student Standing, 3 tenured or untenured

*{this smaller group's focus is Periclean, Palamountain, Honors Forum membership, any assistance with SEE-Beyond, probation, grade appeals, etc.}*

--2 Faculty Liaisons to the Board, 2 tenured

*{they observe the 3 BOT and have an annual meeting with the Academic Affairs committee of the Board}*

--2 faculty reps to IPPC. IPPC would streamline its own operations, keeping only the budget and admissions subcommittees. The rest of IPPC subcommittee work would be accomplished by the appropriate administrative and staff structure in place at the college, with those administrators coming to Faculty Senate when they need input and/or faculty assistance on a particular initiative or problem.

--remaining (15 or so?) Faculty Senate members can be called upon for task force/ad hoc work as the Senate sees fit or when the President or DOF/VPAA needs focused group work completed on particular initiatives or problems. All such working groups will have clear beginning and ending dates and will be provided with specific charges, as is our current practice at the College.

--remaining Faculty Senate members also function as an expanded version of our current FAB, a group of “wise men and women” who can be called upon and assembled into smaller groups when there is a CAFR case, a need for an AP, a GP, a Tenure Review, Tenure Appeal, or a harassment case. In effect, these folks could be called upon, when necessary, to function as “councils” of various kinds to respond to particular “cases.”

Note: There is no CEPP here because the key work of the Senate is educational mission, policy, and planning at the College. That would be the focus of its regular meetings. The second key project, personnel, is to be done in the smaller committees.

At the Faculty Meeting, there will be a monthly report from the Faculty Senate, given by one of the two Faculty Leaders. Thus, another key part of their position is to facilitate communication as well as to advance work that needs to be done to keep the college moving forward.