

Report of the Chair of the Faculty Senate

May 13, 2009

Penn's faculty, through the Faculty Senate, plays an important role in determining the intellectual direction of the University, working collaboratively with the administration in the process of shared governance. All standing faculty are members of the Senate, although our work is carried out principally through an elected Senate Executive Committee (SEC) and several standing committees. These committees consult regularly with the President and Provost, as well as other senior administrators, deans and faculty colleagues, on a wide range of issues facing the University. We have been fortunate this year to have the thoughtful and enthusiastic participation of many outstanding faculty members, both on SEC and its committees, and the Past Chair, Chair and Chair-Elect of the Senate have had frequent and productive meetings with the President and the Provost, sharing the views of the faculty with the administration.

Highlights of the 2008-09 academic year

A detailed account of this year's Senate activities can be found in the monthly reports of SEC actions and the reports of the Senate committees, all published in the *Almanac*. Much of the discussion, both in SEC and in several committees, focused on the changing nature of higher education and the faculty in the 21st century. Some highlights of this year's discussions include the following:

- **Diversifying the faculty.** In February SEC held a wide-ranging discussion regarding both the values of and the challenges to improving faculty diversity. The discussion began with a summary of current diversity initiatives by Vincent Price, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and current Interim Provost. The ensuing conversation highlighted the continuing need to educate departments and schools regarding the importance of recruiting and retaining minority faculty, as well as the ongoing challenge of informing the faculty regarding initiatives undertaken by the Provost's office to improve diversity. The Senate Committee on Faculty Development, Diversity and Equity (SCFDDE) plans a joint effort with the University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity, in partnership with Office of the Provost, to develop mechanisms for increasing awareness of diversity initiatives.
- *Recognition for service.* An additional theme that emerged from the SEC diversity discussion was the perception of many faculty members that their service activities were not valued by department chairs and deans. It was suggested that departments and schools recognize and reward service (such as SEC and Senate committee membership, as well as mentoring activities). This topic warrants further discussion at SEC and with the administration, particularly since interest in service to the Faculty Senate is currently very high and should be encouraged.
- *The role of non-standing faculty.* Last year the Senate Committee on Faculty and the Academic Mission (SCOF) initiated a discussion on the role of non-standing faculty in the 21st century university. That conversation was continued this year with a robust discussion at SEC in which several themes emerged: the differing uses of non-standing faculty among various departments and schools (for example, whether they teach introductory or higher-level courses); the use of full-time versus part-time non-standing faculty; and the rights of non-standing faculty to academic freedom, representation, and job security. SEC and

SCOF members recommended additional conversations on this subject, as SCOF continues a census of “who teaches our students.”

- *Seeking Sustainability: The Founder’s Day Symposium.* The Senate hosted a lively Founders Day Symposium on January 16, 2009, designed to showcase Penn’s faculty in honor of Benjamin Franklin’s birthday. “Seeking Sustainability: Penn Confronts the Local and Global Challenge” was moderated by President Amy Gutmann and included faculty members Gary Bernstein (SAS), Robert Giegengack (SAS), William Braham (Design), Eugenie Birch (Design) and Eric Orts (Wharton). The symposium explored the prospects, realities, challenges, rewards and obligations of universities to exercise leadership by modeling ways to address environmental sustainability as part of the University’s academic mission.
- *Economic status of the faculty.* The Committee on Economic Status of the Faculty (SCESF) worked closely with Vince Price, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, and Stacey Lopez, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Analysis, to update the Economic Status of the Faculty Report and develop a time-line for future reports that will permit their findings to be used in setting faculty salary guidelines. We gratefully acknowledge Stacey Lopez, Vince Price, SCESF Chair Laura Perna and other members of the committee for their extraordinary efforts in producing this document.
- *Monitoring the progress of faculty mentoring programs and family-friendly policies.* The Senate Committee on Faculty Development, Diversity and Equity, played an instrumental role, with the Provost’s Office, in establishing mandatory mentoring programs for junior faculty members in all schools. The committee continues to monitor these programs by gathering data on mentoring best practices to post on the Provost’s Faculty Affairs website and also recommended revision of tenure clock extension language in templates for letters to external reviewers.
- *Oversight of educational policy.* The Committee on Students and Educational Policy (SCSEP) had a productive meeting with the new Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Eric Furda to discuss mechanisms for faculty input into the admissions process. The committee also met with Associate Provost for Education Andy Binns, SAS Graduate Dean Ralph Rosen, and representatives of GAPSA (Graduate and Professional Student Assembly) and SASgov to monitor the effects of the uniform system of graduate tuition charges implemented this year.
- *Partnership with the Office of the Provost to revise the Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators:* Every Senate committee reviewed a part of the revised handbook for accuracy. The result will be an accurate and up-to-date document that is easily searchable on-line, a significant improvement over the previous version.
- *Understanding the changing use of sabbatical leaves.* The Committee on Faculty and the Administration (SCOA) has continued to monitor use of sabbatical leaves. Data obtained last year from the Office of the Provost indicated that faculty in some schools and departments were not making use of the opportunities for scholarly leaves. Current efforts entail interviews with faculty who have taken sabbaticals during the past two years, to help understand the current use of scholarly leaves, as well as impediments to taking these leaves.

Moving Forward

Together we have accomplished a great deal this year; yet much remains to be done. The discussion of the nature of Penn's faculty in the 21st century is one that must continue. I outline below some of the issues that I believe the faculty, in partnership with the administration, must address as we move forward.

- *Diversifying the faculty.* A thriving and vibrant academy can only exist when its faculty avails itself of all available talent and when the diversity of the faculty reflects the diversity of its students. Although we have made improvements in recent years, the diversity of our faculty does not yet match the diversity of our students. Women comprise 52% of our students, but only 18% of full professors and 15% of department chairs (although we do better with deans and presidents, at 33% and 100%, respectively!). Further, 38% of those accepted for admission to the Class of 2012 are Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American, compared with 17% of the standing faculty. The availability of appropriate role models can make the difference in determining whether students see a career in the academy as a viable option. The Office of the Provost has instituted numerous initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty, which must be vigorously promoted and monitored by the Senate.
- *Continued analysis of the changing contours of the faculty.* University faculties are aging, since a law banning mandatory retirement went into effect in 1994. In addition, the current economic downturn may further discourage faculty from retiring due to loss of investment income. While we all benefit from the wisdom of our senior faculty, this trend has several potential implications. The abundance of older faculty makes it more difficult to hire young faculty members, which slows diversification of the faculty, as well as the process of bringing fresh ideas into classrooms and laboratories. At the same time, many young doctoral candidates (particularly women) opt out of the academy for careers with better work-life balance. It is important that we understand the impact of these factors, monitor their effects on our faculty, and implement mechanisms to mitigate them.
- *The importance of communication.* Because Penn is a large decentralized institution, it can be difficult to convey information to those who need it. The Tri-Chairs of the Senate have encouraged the University administration to communicate more frequently with the faculty, and they have done so in a variety of ways. For example, President Gutmann has communicated directly with the faculty, as well as other constituencies, regarding the effects of the economic downturn on the University, and participated in a very thoughtful discussion with SEC on this topic. Interim Provost Vince Price has updated the Provost's web site to provide easy access to information such as the Gender and Minority Equity Progress Reports and family-friendly policies. However, many initiatives (such as faculty diversity and the parameters of the appointment and promotion process) require an ongoing dialogue between the administration and the faculty. To participate fully in these discussions, the faculty must become more proactive, educating themselves (for example, by reading the Almanac and participating in faculty governance) so they are aware of major University initiatives.
- *Faculty-related data.* Past Chair's reports have emphasized the need for improved collection and organization of faculty-related data for the purposes of monitoring and self-study. We are nearing the point where such annual reminders may no longer be necessary. The Faculty Information System, a joint project of the Office of the Provost, Institutional

Research, the 12 Schools, and Information Systems & Computing, is being developed to provide a complete and central record of faculty history. It will be important for the Senate to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this system, since several Senate committees depend on the ready availability of accurate data.

Grateful acknowledgements

The work of the Faculty Senate is only made possible through the dedicated efforts of many faculty members who believe in the importance of service and have given time and energy to furthering shared governance. I have been privileged to work with all of them this year. I am especially grateful to Past Chair Larry Gladney, whose exceptional wisdom and insight have guided us, and to Chair-Elect Harvey Rubin, whose broad knowledge of the University and activist tendencies bode well for the future of the Senate. Larry Levin has served graciously and effectively as Secretary of SEC. None of our work would have been possible without the extraordinary skills of Sue White, Executive Assistant to the Faculty Senate, who has made my job this year immeasurably easier.

We are fortunate to have enjoyed the dedicated work of many truly excellent Senate committee and commission chairs: Cindy Christian (SCOA), Steve Phipps (SCOF), Lois Evans (SCFDDE), Laura Perna (SCESF), Michael Zuckerman and Kelly Jordan-Sciutto (SCSEP), Alan Rappe (SCAFR), Martin Pring (Publication Policy for Almanac), and Barry Cooperman (Faculty Grievance Commission). They, and the members of their committees, have all done an outstanding job.

We are also deeply grateful to President Amy Gutmann, former Provost Ron Daniels and Interim Provost Vince Price, for their strong and open partnership with the faculty in leading the University. Throughout our biweekly consultations, coffee chats, meetings with SEC, and involvement with our symposia, they have been true to the best model of shared governance. We have also benefited from numerous consultations with Associate Provost Andy Binns and Vice Provost Steve Fluharty, and have enjoyed working with University Secretary Leslie Kruhly and the Associate Director for University Council and Ceremony Brenda Brand. And finally, I thank my colleagues on the Senate Executive Committee and all the Senate committees for an educational and stimulating year, and I look forward to my role as Past Chair during the upcoming year.

-- Sherri Adams