

Committee on Academic & Related Affairs 2006-07 Report

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Overview

Enclosed please find separate reports and recommendations concerning four areas of campus affairs on which this year's committee concentrated:

- Relations with the Penn Book Store
- Penn Libraries
- Undergraduate Admissions, specifically, the common application
- Governance of Athletics

In addition to these specific reports, the committee has an overall recommendation that concerns the future mission and functioning of the committee itself. The sense of the committee this year is that its mandate is huge to the point of being overwhelming. It may be typical of our experience that the issues associated with our charges were not especially pressing or controversial. In that context, it is difficult to get faculty to devote time and attention to what is essentially routine oversight. The resources of the University Council are taxed doing a thorough job of oversight across the many issues of the committee's mandate.

We are also not persuaded that traditional oversight, which is more of an after-the-fact process, is necessarily the best approach for many of the issues that could potentially come before the committee. In many cases it would be more useful for the Penn community to have real-time influence on administrative decisions.

To that end, we recommend that the University create advisory boards to help guide the administration in the four important areas on which we report this year: Athletics, Undergraduate Admissions, Libraries, and Book Store. (The individual reports contain more detailed recommendations.) We envision the Advisory Boards working with the respective administrative offices of the University to provide an opportunity for input from the Penn community into decision making and to provide a sounding board for important decisions and actions before they occur. We see these Boards as being attached to each of the respective administrative offices and being managed by them.

Our interactions with various Penn administrators over the course of this year indicates that in many cases they have sought out input from the Penn community on their own, and Advisory Boards would help simplify the process of seeking input. We see these boards as helping the administration with the issues that the administration has to address, not as oversight boards.

Specifically, we believe that these boards should be tailored to the needs of each area but in general should be:

- Composed of members who are representative of the Penn community
- Should have terms of multiple years with staggered appointments to create some continuity of experience
- Should be small enough in number to be manageable – 6 to 8 members seems about right to us
- Should be chaired by a faculty member

We also believe that the advisory boards should report at least annually to this committee about the issues they see arising in their areas. The advantage of this approach is that it allows the committee to continue to play an oversight role over the areas where it now has jurisdiction but with the considerable advantage of having input from Advisory Boards that are already knowledgeable about the relevant issues. This avoids the need for the committee to make the investment de novo each year in identifying the issues in each of the areas under its mandate. In terms of suggesting a charge for next year's committee, below please find a list ranked in order of important of the topics of that we thought were important for us to address and that we did not have the resources to consider this year. We suggest that the 2007-2008 committee use these as a starting point to develop their own agenda for next year.

Relations with the Penn Book Store

The Committee met with Chris Bradie to consider issues associated with the Penn Book Store. Penn's relationship with Barnes and Noble, which operates the bookstore, is managed by Mr. Bradie, Executive Director for Business Services. We had extensive discussions with Mr. Bradie concerning the nature of that relationship as well as issues that were raised by the Committee.

Penn has established three objectives for the Bookstore: to provide course materials in support of the academic mission of the University; to be a place of community; to promote the brand identity of the University.

Penn has a contractual relationship with Barnes and Noble, but in practice, the relationship is much more open-ended than one might expect in a contractual model, allowing Penn some continuing influence over how the bookstore opens. This relationship is complex and appears to include a range of informal sources of influence. We certainly applaud the University's efforts to shape how the bookstore operates. Mr. Bradie gives every indication of being actively and regularly involved in identifying the interests of the Penn community and prodding Barnes and Noble to pursue them. For example, the bookstore recently convened a faculty forum on digital texts and received no strong objections from the faculty. Currently, 25 courses have the option of using digital texts.

Our sense was that input from the community is taken seriously, and we believe it would be helpful to alert the community as to how to give such input. In particular, the "Idea Web" on the University website appears to provide an effective mechanism for influence as messages about the bookstore sent through this system go directly to several officials at Penn as well as at Barnes and Noble.

The Committee believes, however, that a more formal arrangement through which the University community could communicate ideas about the bookstore could be helpful. We propose that Penn consider setting up an advisory board on the bookstore that could provide Mr. Bradie and

ultimately Barnes and Noble with feedback and ideas about bookstore operations.

The area where we believe the bookstore most needs guidance from the community is in helping it reflect the diversity and pluralism of our community, to make it seem more like a part of Penn and not just another Barnes and Noble store. Given that the bookstore will begin a process of renovation and redesign this summer, it would be an ideal time to bring input from the community to important decisions that will shape the ambiance of feel of the store. While such an advisory committee does not need to be large, it is important that it be designed to represent the entire Penn community.

Penn Libraries

The charge of our subcommittee was to examine mechanisms through which the Penn Community has influence on the Penn library system. The general Penn Community may not be aware of any mechanism to have their voices heard, especially on grand and global issues regarding the Library System. But at the micro-level, where specific decisions are made, there are mechanisms through which their opinions have influence. There are a number of committees within the University, mostly at the level of the individual Colleges and Schools within Penn, which have the task of providing input into the library system. Our subcommittee interviewed members of these various committees. Vice Provost Rogers meets with many School level Consultative Committees regularly and uses these for exchange of information. At this point, the participants in these arrangements generally report satisfaction with the feedback process. Our sense is that the current system needs to be in operation longer in order to assess its overall operation.

In addition, our subcommittee conducted a survey of graduate students, which asked the following questions:

1. *Graduate Group/School:*
2. *Library(s) you use:*
3. *In your experience are there any big issues/challenges/concerns involving the libraries?*
4. *Are you aware of, have you ever used the mechanism for bringing issues/challenges/concerns to the attention of the library staff?*
5. *Are there any positive experiences you can share?*

The results are summarized in the following table:

Grad Grp/ School	Lib. used	issues/challenges/ concerns	Feedback Mech.	Positive Exp.
Ling./SAS	Van Pelt	BorrowDirect/ EZBorrow	Missing Book Req.	Great Library, Good Atm., Film Coll.
	Van Pelt	No Self-check out, more computer st.	Made no formal use	Numerous copy stations
Anthro/SAS	Museum, VP, Fine Arts, Annen.	Entrance Steps to VP for not totally handicaped	The Librarian	
Phys. Astro./ SAS	VP, Math/Physics	No	No	Interlibrary loan
Antro. /SAS	VP	Difficulty getting around. Better signs	Used email 3 times. No resp.	
Math./SAS	Math/Phys, VP	Annoying to have your bags checked.	Library worker, supervisor	The staff at Math/phys. Friendly and helpful

Ling./SAS	VP	'Silence and quiet' rule should be enforced	Library staff. Good	Impressed with services. WebDoc fast and free!!!
SP2	VP	Option to renew items at the Borrow-Direct Sys.	No	Long opening hrs. The EZ-Borrow System
Anthro./SAS	Museum, VP, Fine Arts	Not enough Computers, Those in FA need repair	No	Student helper great, friendly and helpful
	VP, museum, Fine Arts	The search engine seriously lacking.	No	Research. librarians extraordinarily helpful & friendly
Anthro./ GAS	Museum, VP, BioMed.	Library doesn't fully subscribe to "Wiley InterScience"	Had no occasion to use one	WebDoc, Museum Library and its staff
Art Hist./SAS	Art History, VP, Museum	Contacting VP staff unpleasant. Cost of printing from computer. Confusing layout of Museum Library.	Not aware of formal mechanism except the staff.	Inter-Library-Loan is super-fast. Fine Arts Staff kind and helpful.
Hist. & Soc. Of Science/SAS	VP	Occas. loaned books returned at the end of the term gone have missing.	Staff helpful in resolving problems.	VCAT, Books by Mail, carrels, ProQuest
Near East. Lang. & Civ./SAS	VP, Museum, Fine Arts	Egyptology collection divide between museum and VP Libraries.	Yes I am aware.	UMI Dissertation Express, Borrow Direct and ILL
Near East. Lang. & Civ./SAS	VP, Museum, CAJS	Egyptology collection divide between museum and VP Libraries.		Staff great in dealing with specific problems.
Poly. Sc./SAS	VP	Enforcement of rules against cell phones	No	Library staff, Borrow Direct.
Comp. & Info. Sciences/SEAS	SEAS, Math/Phys, VP	None	No	VCat to find movies available at the Library
	BioMeD, VP	None	No	Articles through Lib. Loan
CIT/SEAS	VP, SEAS, Math/Phys	Math/Phys. Library hard to find.	Person at the check out desk	DVD's at VP, tech. center in PV, search engs
Comp. & Info. Sciences/SEAS	VP, SEAS, Math/Phys	Worst online catalog search system. Not enough copies of popular items.		The storage/photocopy staff very efficient.
SAS	VP, Annen. Fine Arts, Lippincott	The staff can be rather rude/unhelpful (esp. at the front of VP) when answering simple questions.	No. There should be. Possibility of anonymous comments/complaints	The Library workshops on Endnote and Powerpoint
Math/SAS	Math/Phys, VP	No	Yes	Retrieving from Storage
Near East. Lang. & Civ./SAS	VP	No major issues. But useful for students to be able to get book by mail.	Yes	Many, but specially ILL
SAS	VP	"..ridiculous that people can recall books"	No	All others. IM share
History of Art/SAS	Fine Arts	None	Never had the need.	Library staff fantastic.
	VP	Security System		

Undergraduate Admissions, specifically, the common application

The subcommittee looking at undergraduate admissions met with Lee Stetson, Dean of Admissions, and discussed issues around the common application:

- Penn had the largest number of students in the country who applied for early decision
- The Common Application was well-received by all schools using the Common Application
- 50 % of Early Decision applicants used the Common Application
- The use of the Common Application deepened the quality of the students who applied
- SAT scores were higher of the students who applied using the Common Application at Penn; the yield for this is not known
- Princeton University yield increased
- The increase of quality of Penn applicants may not be totally related to the use of the Common Application
- Overall, the Common Application helped to get students get into the pool of applicants who otherwise would not have had the opportunity
- The Common Application is an easier process than the use of the regular application process for all institutions
- During the first year the Common Application was instituted, it was utilized by 67% of the total
- There are two choices in using the Common Application; paper or online. Penn also has the option of a paper or online application. Overall, most students used the online version of the Common Application.

Governance of Athletics

The subcommittee met with designated leaders of relevant groups and task forces related to athletics, among them the Student Athletic Advisory Committee, the Athletics Board of Overseers, and the Pottruck Committee, to determine whether there are overlapping interests, issues, or mutual projects.

The academic year 2006-2007 was a time of significant transition for university oversight of athletic activities involving the Penn community. Due to restructuring of administrative committees on campus, the activities of the former Committee on Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics (CRIA) were subsumed by the Committee on Academic and Related Affairs (CARA). One of the last activities of CRIA was participation by committee members on the task force that reviewed the University's adherence to the rules and regulations of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which led to successful recertification of Penn as a member in good standing of the NCAA.

Due to the historically important role played by CRIA with regard to recreation and athletics, an initial subcommittee within CARA was established concerning athletic activities at Penn. As stated above, the charge of the Athletic Subcommittee was to communicate with the various administrative groups on campus working on issues dealing with recreational and intercollegiate athletics. Due to the facts that CARA itself was not yet structured at the start of the 2006-2007 academic year, that initial CARA meetings involved discussion about the overall role of this new committee, and that eventual Athletic Subcommittee Chair, Bill McCool, was on sabbatical, discussion amongst Athletic Subcommittee members was late in coming. Therefore, the opportunity to efficiently and accurately meet the subcommittee's charge was not forthcoming.

Nevertheless, subcommittee members propose that specific recommendations from the final CRIA report receive continued attention from the University Administration, and offer the following recommendations:

1. Greenspace issues:

Maintaining a sufficient amount of greenspace at Penn for recreational activities should remain an administrative priority. Available greenspace is a vital part of the total supportive environment for academic learning and personal growth on which universities pride themselves. As with all universities, particularly urban ones, the amount of available space for expansion and growth can be quite limited. In situations such as these, when expansion of facilities is required, greenspace is usually the first site to be converted. Without subsequent expansion of greenspace, especially playable areas, elsewhere on campus to replace what is lost, there is consistent reduction over time of open land available for outdoor activities.

As Penn expands, the University must give attention to a subsequent growth in the amount of available and accessible greenspace to avoid becoming a one-dimensional institution. Not only can maintaining greenspace positively affect the current student body and staff, but also acts as a strong tool for recruitment of future students and members of the Penn Community.

2. Representation and oversight regarding recreational and intercollegiate athletics:

Athletic activities – both recreational and competitive – play an important role in any university’s standing as a well-rounded institution of learning. Not only is the health of those involved in activities positively influenced, but the overall spirit of the university community can be related to athletics. That said, it is important for Penn to maintain:

- a) a representative voice for the recreational needs of the general student body, including both organized intramural programs and less formal general physical activities
- b) a proponent organization for the recreational benefits of the broader University community (faculty & staff)
- c) a standing liaison between the University Department of Athletics and the Administration
- d) an advising body with regard to the mission of the University Department of Athletics.

It is possible that CARA can play this multifaceted role, although the extent to which that can occur within the current structure remains unknown.

3. Exploration of various organizations at Penn that have missions related to the promotion and oversight of recreational and intercollegiate athletics

This recommendation is related to the Athletics Subcommittee’s charge for the current year that was stated previously. Although time issues curtailed completion of the charge during the 2006-2007 year, it is recommended that the 2007-2008 academic year begin with CARA delineating the roles of various Penn committees and task forces whose missions involve the promotion and oversight of recreational and intercollegiate athletics. This would assist the Administration in efficiently maintaining an active role for athletics in the Penn Community life.

Suggested topics for the 2007-2008 Committee on Academic & Related Affairs:

- Global vs. local orientation of the University and the associated tensions
- Interdisciplinary/integrative issues in education/research across the University
- Research ethics policies for all students and how those policies are communicated and enforced
- Early decision admissions