

# **University Council Committee on Committees Report on the Functioning of Council Committees Under the Newly Revised Committee Structure**

## **Definition of Tasks and Implementation of the Review**

In February of this year, Council Steering requested that the Committee on Committees review the functioning of the Council committees and provide some feedback to Steering as to how these committees are functioning in the 2006-7 academic year. In 2006 the Council Committee structure was streamlined to produce a smaller group of standing committees, each of which has the power to form subcommittees as needed to handle specific needs that were covered by previous full committees or as new demands arise. With just the first year of the new committee structure not yet complete, it is too soon to give a formal evaluation of the new structure. This report is intended only to provide a view of the functioning of committees within the new structure before formal year-end reports are issued by the committees themselves.

Each of the Council committees was assigned to a faculty member on the Committee on Committees for review. The review conducted by faculty consisted of phone and/or e-mail interviews using a specific set of questions posed to the chairs and staff support people. Other university constituency groups were asked to provide information on committee performance through their already established mechanisms for communicating feedback to their governing bodies. In most cases, this consisted of asking the same or an equivalent set of questions to the constituent representatives on each committee. All constituencies then reported back their findings to the Committee on Committees in March for discussion. This report provides a broad summary of the findings, however it is important to point out that a large amount of information was gathered and therefore Steering is advised to look at the individual constituency reports to get a fine-grained view of how the committees are performing as judged by the constituency representatives.

### **Questions posed:**

1. Was the committee's charge for this year clear and appropriate?
2. What changes, if any, do you think need to be made in the committee's charge?
3. What are the issues you are addressing this year?
4. How many times did you meet as a full committee? As a subcommittee?
5. What are the key issues that need to be addressed next year?
6. Who of the current members should continue to serve on the committee next year? Who should be the chairperson?

7. Is the committee constituted correctly? (expertise, representation of interests, etc.)
8. Has the committee been meeting with the appropriate administrators?

### **Broad Findings**

All Council committees are functioning well. All Council committees appear to be quite active, meeting regularly either through subcommittees or in meetings of the whole; engaging administrators and University community experts in discussions directly related to their charges; and responding to new requests from Council as needed. All the committee chairs and staff members and the vast majority of the constituent representatives found the committee charges to be clear and appropriate to the defined roles of the committees. Committees are taking on substantial issues for study including the common application (for admissions), affirmative action, athletic and library advisory boards, sustainability, open space issues, mental health coverage parity, and many others. The committees reported ready access to administrators and managed to find external experts as needed for advice on issues requiring particular expertise or detailed information that is not readily available to non-experts. The committees appear to be appropriately staffed as far as constituent representation goes although we did hear a few suggestions about the possibility of adding more student representation to the committees with broader charges.

There were no substantial changes to the charges suggested by the chairs. As might be expected, the committees with the largest set of responsibilities, such as the Committee on Academic and Related Affairs, found that there was too much to do. However, upon further discussion as to how these committees were functioning, the Committee on Committees was convinced that this feeling might largely be alleviated by advising the committees to make more use of subcommittees and the flexibility now provided to expand membership as necessary to tackle their issues. We expect that as chairs gain experience with the new structure, they will inevitably find efficient ways of parceling out a broad range of responsibilities and then integrating the work of the subcommittees into the committee reports for action by Council. We also found that different constituencies tended to focus on different issues within the broadest charges. This was manageable, but again indicates that appropriate use of subcommittees might provide for committee members to feel fully engaged on the issues most important to them while still contributing to other issues being examined by their committee.

Finally, we find that those committees (e.g. Honorary Degrees, Personnel Benefits) completely unaffected by the change in committee structure operated just as before. The exception in this group was with Pluralism given the merger with the Affirmative Action Council. Our examination of this committee indicates that it might be advisable to examine the role of administrators within the operation of the Pluralism committee. The importance of unfettered discussion of the university atmosphere for all constituencies and all groups on campus is

paramount and it is thus important to ensure that all feasible means of hearing all views remains the rule within the newly merged committee.

### **Description of University Council Committee Responsibilities**

**Academic and Related Affairs** has cognizance over matters of undergraduate recruiting, admissions, and financial aid that concern the University as a whole or those that are not the specific responsibility of individual faculties; of all programs in recreation, intramural and club sports, and intercollegiate athletics; and of all matters of policy relating to research and the general environment for research at the University, including the assignment and distribution of indirect costs and the assignment of those research funds distributed by the University. The Committee considers the purposes of a university bookstore. It advises the administration on policies, developments, and operations of the bookstores and libraries; in such areas as international student services, foreign fellowships and studies abroad, exchange programs, and cooperative undertakings with foreign universities; on athletic operations and recommends changes in policy when appropriate; and on those proposals for sponsored research referred to it because of potential conflict with University policy.

**Campus and Community Life** has cognizance over the University's electronic and physical communications and public relations activities; advises on the relationship of the University to the surrounding community; has cognizance of the conditions and rules of undergraduate and graduate student life on campus; and considers and recommends the means to improve safety and security on the campus.

**Facilities** keeps under review the planning and operation of the University's physical plant and all services associated therewith, including transportation and parking.

**Honorary Degrees** does most of its work, intensively, during the fall term; solicits recommendations for honorary degrees from faculty and students and submits nominations to the Trustees.

**Personnel Benefits** deals with the benefits programs for all University personnel. Special expertise in personnel, insurance, taxes or law is often helpful.

**Pluralism** advises on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere for all members of the University community.