

University Council Committee on Committees Report on the Functioning of Council Committees During Academic Year 2007-08

Chair: Sherrill Adams

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During the 2006-07 academic year, the Council committee structure was streamlined to produce a smaller number of standing committees, each of which has the power to form subcommittees as needed to handle specific needs. This is the second year of the new committee structure. Hence this report is the first to provide a full view of how the committees are functioning within the new structure.

Mechanism of evaluation

Each faculty member on the Committee on Committees was assigned to review a Council committee. Each review consisted of in-person, phone, or email interviews with the committee chair and staff support person, using the questions below. Other University constituencies were asked to provide information on committee performance via their members who serve on the committees. All committee members then reported their findings to the Committee on Committees in March for discussion. This report provides an overview of the general findings, as well as specific comments on the functioning of each committee. However, Steering is advised to look at the individual committee reports to gain a complete view of how the committees are performing.

Questions posed

1. Was the committee's specific charge for this year clear and appropriate?
2. What changes, if any, do you think need to be made in the committee's general charge?
3. What issues were addressed this year?
4. How many times did the full committee meet? If subcommittees were created, how many were created, how often did they meet and what was their purpose?
5. Based on the charges for this year and the discussion to date, what do you see as issues emerging for consideration next year?
6. Which members would you recommend to serve on the committee next year? If you have been chair for 2 or more years, who would you recommend as the chairperson?
7. Is the membership of the committee well-suited to the committee's charge (expertise, representation of interests, etc.)?
8. Who has the committee consulted or met with during the past year?
9. What problems did the committee encounter, e.g. access to necessary resources?
10. What recommendations would you make going forward?

Findings applicable to all committees

All Council committees are functioning well. All committees appear to be quite active, meeting regularly in meetings of the whole and/or in subcommittees and engaging administrators and University community experts in discussions directly related to their charges. Several suggestions made to improve the functioning of all committees are outlined here; committee-specific suggestions and comments will be outlined below.

The general comments appear to reflect a great deal of interest on the part of committee members both to participate and to maximize their ability to effect change with the following recommendations:

- *The chair of the committee should have experience with the work of that committee*
- *Appoint committee members for overlapping 2-year terms, to provide continuity.*
- *Set meeting times before the beginning of the academic year so that meetings can begin earlier in the academic year and committee members can arrange their schedules to permit maximal attendance.*
- *Continue to reinforce the purpose of the committees and the processes by which their deliberations are reported to Council and considered further by Steering.*

University Council Committee Charges

The Committee on Academic and Related Affairs:

- Oversees matters of recruitment, admissions, and financial aid that concern the University as a whole and that are not the specific responsibility of individual faculties
- Advises the administration on policies, development and operations of bookstores and libraries
- Reviews and monitors issues related to the international activities of the University in such areas as services for international students and scholars, foreign fellowships and studies abroad, faculty, staff and student exchange programs, and cooperative undertakings with foreign universities
- Advises the administration on recreation and intramural and intercollegiate athletics and their integration with the educational program of the University
- Advises the administration on 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
- Advises the administration on proposals for sponsored research referred to it because of potential conflict with University policy.

The charge of this committee is extremely broad, and several individuals felt that athletics does not belong within this committee's purview. This is in part because many committee members are not interested in athletics and in part because the link between athletics and academic affairs is not necessarily strong. However, one could argue that the link should be strengthened, rather than weakened.

The Committee on Campus and Community Life:

- Oversees the University's communications and public relations activities
- Advises the Council on the relationship of the University to the surrounding community
- Oversees the conditions and rules of undergraduate and graduate student life on campus
- Recommends means to improve safety and security on the campus.

The committee would like to see stronger participation from faculty.

The Committee on Facilities

- Reviews the planning and operation of the University's physical plant and all services associated therewith, including transportation and parking

No additional recommendations.

The Committee on Personnel Benefits

- Deals with the benefits programs for all University personnel

No additional recommendations.

The Committee on Diversity and Equity (formerly Council Pluralism + President's Affirmative Action Council)

- Aids Penn in fostering and taking full advantage of its diversity as well as in strengthening ties across all boundaries to enrich and enliven the campus community
- Advises the offices of the President, Provost, and the Executive Vice-Presidents on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere on campus for the inclusion and appreciation of diversity among all members of the University community

As a newly constituted committee, there were no members who had served previously on the U.C. Pluralism Committee and the University's Affirmative Action Council. This resulted in a loss of continuity with the work of the previous committees.

A major concern of this committee was lack of access to the COFHE campus climate survey. The Provost plans to report on the survey results at the April Council meeting.

The next two committees were not evaluated since they act independently and were not changed under the new committee structure.

The Committee on Honorary Degrees

- Solicits recommendations for honorary degrees from faculty and students and submits nominations to the Trustees.

The Committee on Open Expression

- Monitors the communication processes to prevent conflicts that might emerge from failure of communication
- Recommends policies and procedures for improvement of communication;
- Investigates alleged infringements of the right of open expression
- Advises administrative officers where appropriate
- Participates in evaluation and resolution of conflicts that may arise from incidents or disturbances on campus