

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **Faculty Executive Committee**

June 8, 2009

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Faculty Executive Committee met 28 times during the academic year of 2008-2009. The Chair participated in new faculty orientation programs in September and April and contributed to

## UWW

FEC spent considerable time this year monitoring the process through which consideration of closing UWW took place. We weighed in substantively about questions of governance at several different points during this process. That input and our sense of the overall process is detailed below in Appendix A.

## SERVICE AND GOVERNANCE

The other important issue FEC considered this year is how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the faculty's work in service and governance in general. During this inquiry, which extended from efforts of the committee during 2007-2008, we pondered a range of perennial questions and current challenges. The culmination of our effort this year is a report on the committee system, which we presented on the floor of the April 3 Faculty Meeting. This report, which is included below as Appendix B, will guide FEC's ongoing consideration of this problem next year.

## IPPC/FEC-6/FEC-9

One of the main challenges we have identified in the current operation of our governance system is getting enough faculty who are willing to serve on important committees. A focal point of this concern is IPPC, which includes 19 individuals, and, also seven (7) committees (2 of which are IPPC-1 and IPPC-2).



## APPENDIX A

### REVIEW OF THE PROCESS BEHIND THE DECISION TO TERMINATE THE UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS (UWW) PROGRAM

The Faculty Executive Committee believes it is useful to chronicle the process by which the Skidmore College faculty came to recommend that the UWW Program be terminated at the February 27, 2009 faculty meeting. This overview provides a chronology of events, summarizes concerns about the process, and offers some conclusions about lessons for the future.

#### TIMELINE

##### Spring 2006

- x UWW Program Self-Study commissioned by Paula Newberg (Dean of Special Programs); final report submitted June 30, 2006

##### Spring 2007

- x Eduventures, a marketing consulting firm, was commissioned by Jeff Segrave (Interim Dean of Special Programs) to assess UWW's marketing strategy and make recommendations; reports submitted June-November, 2007
- x Special Programs Study Group Susan Kress (Vice President of Academic Affairs) formed the group on January 25, 2007; Committee members: Jim Chansky (ODSP), Tom Denny (Music), Ginger Ertz (Tang), Jeff Segrave (ODSP, Chair), Linda Simon (English), Justin Sipher (IT), Mike Thomas (Financial Affairs), Sandy Welter (MALS), Joanna Zangrando (American Studies); final report submitted October 27, 2007 and then distributed to college community and discussed in multiple venues including Academic Staff and two open forums
- x External Review Led by Jeff Segrave (Interim Dean of Special Programs): April 5, 2007; Reviewers: Myra Bloom (Director of Continuing Education, Sarah Lawrence College) and James W. Hall (Chancellor and President Emeritus, Antioch University and SUNY/Empire State College); final report submitted May, 2007 and then shared with college community as an appendix in the SPSG Final Report

##### Spring 2008

- x Susan Kress proposes that the College close the UWW Program, March 7, 2008
- x Susan Kress makes the decision to suspend enrollment of new UWW students
- x CEPP convenes a special Faculty Meeting, facilitated by FEC, March 21, 2008

- x Susan Kress consults FEC and CEPP about the process for considering closing UWW on March 28, 2008; FEC and CEPP agree that Faculty Handbook language for the “Elimination of a Department” provides the best, albeit imperfect, guidance
- x CEPP holds a community meeting for faculty, staff, alums and other interested parties, April 23, 2008
- x CEPP introduces a motion to close UWW, April 25, 2008
- x Motion to close UWW defeated at the Faculty Meeting on May 14, 2008.; the vote was 65 in favor, 68 opposed, 1 abstention
- x Susan Kress forms the UWW Working Group on June 1, 2008. Committee members: Barbara Beck (Human Resources), Grace Burton (Foreign Languages and Literatures), Sharon Clemmey (Registrar’s Office and UWW Student), Winston Grady-Willis (American Studies), Dan Hurwitz (FEC, Mathematics and Computer Science), Jim Kennelly (Management and Business, former I,3b5 -1.23 Td <0078>Tj .M

- x CEPP holds a community meeting for faculty, staff, students, alums and other interested parties, February 17, 2009



## APPENDIX B\*

### TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING: A REPORT ON THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

#### I. THE PROBLEM

A number of faculty in different venues have expressed concerns about how governance and service work at Skidmore. One of the main issues is that the Faculty Executive Committee routinely has difficulty getting faculty to serve on committees, including those central to the governance system.

Our understanding of these issues is informed by the following sources: FEC's survey on service, Susan Walzer's scholarly research on faculty culture, meetings with Committee of Committees, IPPC, Academic Staff, the VP for Academic Affairs, several ex-members of CAPT from recent years, email communications with the Dean of the Faculty, Department Chairs and Program Directors, and Chairs of all major committees, various conversations with individual faculty, as well as our own observations and deliberations. This work has led us to several preliminary conclusions.

- We reiterate our commitment to a strong system of faculty governance situated in the context of shared, college governance.
- The committee system is out of control. We have more commitments than we can collectively fulfill. The key indication is too many committee spots per faculty member.
- We risk our effectiveness as a governing body at the College because we are spread too thin. Maintaining that effectiveness requires enhancing our efficiency.
- Most of our commitments are productive and valuable, but too much of a good thing is still too much. The recent proliferation of committee work appears to be based on robust strategic planning (e.g., CIGU, FYE, Responsible Citizenship Task Force) and energetic grassroots educational initiatives (e.g., Water Resources Initiative, Environmental Studies, IRB, Health Professions Advisory Committee).
- As in most every institutional endeavor at this time, we must learn to do more with less. The impact of economic scarcity on governance likely means that the utilization of course releases or stipends in service will decrease.
- The nature of bureaucracy is to protect and expand itself. Each committee has a very difficult time imagining a different way of doing things. Any real reform therefore requires a broad institutional commitment, most importantly including the will of the faculty.
- This issue is about structural arrangements related to formal rules of the system as well as cultural values in terms of certain habits that contribute to the overall problem.

#### II. DATA

##### A. OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE WORK

FEC-Eligible Faculty	264
Average Number of Faculty on Sabbatical	17



Average Number of Faculty Available for Committee Work	247
Number of Institutional Committee Spots for Faculty	220
Number of Institutional Committee Spots Vacant	19 <sup>1</sup>
Number of Institutional Committee Spots Occupied	207
Number of Available Faculty per Committee Spot	1.12
Number of Faculty on 1 Committee	71
Number of Faculty on 2 Committees	41
Number of Faculty on 3 Committees	11
Number of Faculty on 4 Committees	4
Number of Faculty on 5 Committees	1
Number of Faculty on at Least One Committee	128
Number of Available Faculty on 0 committees	119 <sup>2</sup>

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Faculty Advisory Board	6
Advisory Panel	0 <sup>6</sup>
Total	92
<b>All-College Committees</b>	
<b>Institutional Policy and Planning Committee</b>	4
<b>IPPC Subcommittees</b>	
Budget and Finance Subcommittee	2
Admissions and Financial Aid Subcommittee	2
Student Affairs Subcommittee	3
Committee Intercultural and Global Understanding	3
Bias Response Group	1
Campus Environment Committee	3
Integrity Board	2
Board of Appeals	2
Honor Code Commission	1
Information Resource Council	3
Institutional Review Board	4
Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee	4
Safety in Workplace Committee	3
Total	37
<b>Advisory Committees</b>	
Engineering Advisory Committee	4
Environmental Studies Steering Committee	9
Health Professions Advisory Committee	7
Neuroscience Steering Committee	4
Women's Studies Advisory Board	3
Fulbright Advisor	1
Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Committee	6
Total	34
<b>Search and Review Committees</b>	
Dean of Admissions Review Committee	2
Director of Arts Administration Search Committee	7
Chaplain Search Committee	1
Total	10
<b>Prize Committees</b>	
Palamountain Prose Award Committee	4
Periclean Honor Society Executive Committee	5
Peace for Justice Prize Committee	1
Porter Prize Committee	10
Total	20
<b>FYE Committees</b>	
Living Learning Group	2
Candace Carlucci Backus First-Year Prize Committee	2
Teagle Review Committee	3
New Faculty Seminar Program	7
Total	10

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<sup>6</sup> Members of Advisory Panel are drawn from the Faculty Advisory Board. Depending on the cases that arise, none or all FAB members may be drawn in to actual committee work. Therefore, members of AP are in some sense a subset of the members of FAB.

<b>Other Committees and Task Forces</b>	
Center Study Group (Teaching and Learning)	3
Responsible Citizenship Task Force	5
Sustainable Food Initiative Lead Team	1
Martin Luther King Jr. Planning Committee	1
Water Resources Initiative	4
Greenberg Advisory Board	3
Other Miscellaneous Committees <sup>7</sup>	?
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

### **Overlapping Membership**

(Committee chairs/members who serve on other committees)  
 CEPP Chair serves on IRC, IPPC, and CC Writing Subcommittee  
 CIGU Chair serves on IPPC  
 Campus Environment Committee Chair serves on IPPC  
 Tenure Appeal Committee consists of TRB and CAPT  
 Two members of FAB serve on AP  
 Three members of IPPC sit on FEC

Grand Total 226

## **C. DEPARTMENT AND PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Countless forms of service are required in departments and programs every day, some of which takes place in the context of formal committees, especially in large departments, and much of which does not, especially in small departments. This service includes work related to curriculum, personnel, strategic initiatives, advising, budgets, infrastructure, capstones, student prizes, faculty development, admissions, alumni relations, and so on. This work surely relates to two items mentioned above we do not fully understand: the 119 faculty members who are not serving on an institutional committee and the numerous “Other Miscellaneous Committees,” which are often invisible to colleagues not directly involved.

## **III. SOLUTIONS**

### **A. A STRUCTURAL SHIFT**

We hope the faculty will consider altering several structural conditions along the following lines.

1. Formally emphasize service on the “big six” central governance committees in new Faculty Handbook language.
2. Revise the Annual Report Summary of Activities form of faculty so as to distinguish more carefully different kinds of service, including work on the central governance committees.
3. Reduce the overall number of faculty spots on committees by approximately 30 percent (and where appropriate those of other stakeholders).

## B. A CULTURAL SHIFT

We also hope the faculty will rethink several cultural habits and adopt the following new working principles of governance.

1. Be lean. All things being equal, the smaller the committee the better. It is easier to plan meetings and make decisions. We must balance this goal with appropriate inclusiveness. But we have probably erred too much on the side of inclusion in recent years. (IPPC with 19 members, the new standing subcommittee of IPPC, CIGU with 15, and the new Task Force on Responsible Citizenship with 12 come to mind.)
2. Emphasize consultation more and representation less. Not every committee needs to have multiple representatives from across college divisions, academic departments or even different pools of expertise. Different colleagues could be consulted productively in the context of more focused, limited timeframes, thus saving their time that would not have to be spent in all the body's meetings and keeping the overall number of each committee down.
3. Att down.

\* The version of this report included here is slightly revised from the one presented on April 3. The changes only involve adjusted numbers for committee spots, which are based on input provided from faculty members since our report was initially circulated. We nevertheless recognize that the numbers still represent an incomplete accounting of all the committee work being carried out at Skidmore.