THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

RE: Results of the Annual Evaluation of Academic Administration

Fall 2009 marked the sixth anniversary of the Faculty Senate's annual evaluation of academic administration by its Administration Evaluation Committee (AEC). Since inception, the practice has been emulated elsewhere, but the U-M remains the most prominent national example of this democratic expression of faculty governance. Numerical results for each year from the Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses are posted at http://aec.umich.edu.

From the outset the AEC process was never intended to supplant more detailed climate surveys that are conducted in some units from time to time. The process has been likened more closely to "taking a patient's temperature" whereby responses on the Likert option scale (strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree, or no basis for judgment) are a census of prevailing attitudes among faculty who choose to volunteer their opinions. The annual surveys have included standardized sets of questions about academic administrators, from president to department chairs, as well as a changing set of General Administration Questions. The latter set includes issues that may be hot topics of the moment, but for which opinions of faculty governance are not always sought in timely fashion.

Following is a brief synopsis of the viewpoints as expressed through the evaluations:

General administration questions -
A series of general questions on administrative matters indicate faculty opinion on some matters of current interest. For example, while there were strong opinions on both sides, there was a slight balance in favor of the new on-line teaching evaluation process from both the Dearborn and Ann Arbor campuses. Conversely, there was a generally negative view of continuous enrollment from the Ann Arbor campus, and intense dissatisfaction with the recent changes in benefits (and the consultation process) indicated by the Dearborn faculty.

President-
The president has drawn favorable views on issues such as promoting scholarly and teaching excellence, and scores very highly in the perception of her fund-raising abilities, her attention to strategic issues, and how she represents the university to the outside world. However, there is persistent sentiment that she does not always consult the faculty adequately before making important decisions. This sentiment expressed toward the president may reflect a perceived generic attitude about the adequacy of faculty consultation at different levels of administration. Certainly, the most recent example of faculty governance involvement in important decision making is the meaningful consultation with SACUA before the appointment of a new provost.

Ann Arbor Provost-
The provost has enjoyed similar approval rates as the president in the areas of promoting scholarship, teaching, and inspiring leadership overall, but even this inspiring leader received her lowest score for the perception of her consultative nature. This too may be attributable to the dissatisfaction with general perceptions about consultation on administrative issues.

Dearborn Chancellor-
The Chancellor is perceived as promoting a scholarly environment, and representing the campus well. The slight concern expressed over the level of consultation is a considerable improvement over the perception expressed in the first year the evaluations were done in Dearborn.

Deans-
With few exceptions the deans on both campuses are viewed favorably (i.e., medians above neutral) with respect to issues such as their encouragement of scholarship and teaching, and their attentiveness to strategic goals, and their promotion of their units to central administration. However, the strength of favorable rankings does vary strongly across the different colleges. Some colleges consistently ranked their deans very highly across the board (*e.g.,* Education, Information, Kinesiology and Law) in all aspects of administration. However, as can be observed in the report at http://aec.umich.edu, there were other colleges that frequently ranked their Deans significantly lower than their peers in different aspects of administration.

Faculty governance makes no claim that these results represent a scientific sampling of faculty opinion. They more closely resemble voluntary participation in a plebiscite by voters who want to register their grass-root opinion. The participation rate has been just under 30 percent of Faculty Senate members overall, with Dearborn participation in recent years slightly exceeding that of the Ann Arbor campus. However, the wide range of scores that includes some very high ones indicates that this process does provide some useful indications of where the administration is doing well, and where there might be cause for further thought. As yet, faculty governance at the Flint campus has not implemented the AEC process, which is above all a local faculty enterprise. The summary responses offer the Board of Regents a view of faculty sentiment that may otherwise be unrepresented at its table, and gives voice to respectful advice offered in the spirit of shared university governance.

(Submitted February, 2010)

Regents' Bylaw 4.04. The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate…The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.