THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Recent Developments

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs meets relatively infrequently over the summer months. Consequently, there are not many developments in faculty governance to report. In this report, we briefly mention the issues that SACUA has considered since the end of the last academic year. The most time-consuming item of business every summer is filling the central faculty governance committees. There are two types of committees that we are solely responsible for filling: (i) the Regentally-mandated advisory committees to the vice-Presidents; and (ii) special-topic study committees established by the Senate Assembly. We are also responsible for providing nominations for other committees that contain a mixture of faculty and administration appointments (such as the Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics). Our main challenge is to ensure a diversity and excellence of representation on these committees by both discipline and demographics. Unfortunately, we are hampered in this endeavor by the fact that service in central faculty governance service does not appear to be sufficiently valued within the units, so the pool of volunteers and nominees tends to be rather limited. We are considering how we might better educate the faculty about the importance of service at the university level. However, addressing the problem of a small pool of volunteers also requires positive efforts from Chairs and Deans to ensure that faculty realize that service at this level is valued by unit administrators, as it is by central administration.

At the beginning of the summer, SACUA had a very informative and interesting meeting with the Director of the DPS. One of the issues that has come to our attention is whether there are areas that should be identified as being of potential concern when an employer hires their own deputized police force. In this regard, we were pleased to be informed that DPS will begin to monitor when it is requested to participate in HR matters. SACUA has also been trying to understand the issues of trespass by employees when applied to an independent public institution.

Over the summer, SACUA commissioned a faculty committee to develop a statement on academic freedom on behalf of the Senate. As described in an earlier report on faculty governance, recent legal developments have led us to believe that the time is ripe for UM to take a leadership role in helping to define academic freedom, as we currently appear not to have such a statement. We are hoping the committee will develop a suitable statement for discussion at the Assembly by the end of the semester.

The final issue that SACUA has considered over the summer was a recent report to the Provost containing suggestions for a new faculty grievance procedure. While the proposed policy is a huge improvement over the previous policy, there appear to still be some issues that need to be discussed by SACUA and the Senate Assembly. Chief among these is a debate about whether the grievance procedure should be completely removed form the unit in which they originated, or whether there should be some unit representation We have realized that we may also need to consider the question of how a grievance board could appropriately respond to a lack of significant participation by any party in a dispute. It is anticipated that this report will be discussed further at SACUA and Assembly meetings during this semester.

(Submitted September, 2009)

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.