

Report of the Faculty Committee on Nominations for the 2008-09 Academic Year

March 2010

Committee Activities

The Nominations Committee was very busy during 2008-09, with the majority of the work load falling in the spring semester.

1. In the fall semester, we filled 11 committee positions vacated by faculty who went on leave or resigned prior to serving a full term. We also staffed the new Committee on Faculty Equity and Diversity (9 appointments) for the year, until an election could be held in the spring. We were approached by chairs of advisory boards for assistance in finding faculty willing to serve on these boards.
2. We solicited nominations from department chairs and chairs of University committees and advisory boards for the President's Award for Excellence in Faculty Governance. A subcommittee of the Nominations Committee chaired by Hye-Sook Wang evaluated the service records of 27 nominees, and recommended 3 faculty members as recipients of these Awards. The FEC approved these recommendations.
3. In the spring semester, we filled another 30 committee openings vacated because of leaves, resignations, or term limits. We also solicited candidates for 3 ballot elections: URC (February 2009); a multi-committee ballot, including APC, TPAC, CFED, FEC, and Grievance (May 2009); and a new election for FEC Vice Chair (prompted by the resignation of the then-VC) and a run-off election prompted by a tie on the May ballot for the Grievance Committee (June 2009). 227 faculty members voted in the URC ballot election, 316 voted in the May 2009 multiple committee ballot election, and 157 voted in the June 2009 election.
4. With the assistance of Cheryl Moreau, we updated and supplemented the information on faculty service records on the Committee's MyCourses site.

Method of Operation

The Committee met as a group twice. The Chair and Vice Chair met several times per semester, either alone or with other committee members, to discuss progress in soliciting candidates for ballot elections. Most communication between committee members occurred via email or by telephone.

Challenges

Faculty are committed to faculty governance, but often feel overwhelmed by the many other demands on their time, particularly the perceived increase in bureaucratic and regulatory demands placed on them by the Administration. There is also an impression by some faculty that the Administration does not value faculty governance.

1. There are perhaps too many committees to staff. In particular, the addition of advisory boards needing to be staffed limits the numbers of faculty available for University committee work. Many faculty express interest in University committees, but are also asked to handle considerable committee duties within departments or centers.
2. Very few faculty members fill out preference sheets. Thus, the Committee typically must make “cold calls” to faculty to gauge their interest in service.
3. The increasing number of faculty taking sabbatical leaves, and the reduced time span between leaves, severely reduced the numbers of faculty available for committee appointments or ballot elections.
4. The requirements for committee membership, in terms of representation by division and by rank and the desirability of having gender and ethnic diversity, are complex and challenging. Many faculty expressing an interest in a particular committee cannot be accommodated because of these complexities.
5. It was relatively easier to identify candidates for ballot elections to TPAC, CFED, and non-officer positions on the FEC than for many other committees, including those not requiring ballot elections.
6. There was more difficulty in identifying candidates for URC and APC. For example, to fill 2 slates on the URC, we approached 16 faculty members. Many faculty members who were contacted were reluctant to put their names forward when advised that the composition of the ballot must be made in consultation with the Provost. There is a perception that the Provost wields veto power over the composition of these ballots.
7. We experienced unprecedented difficulty in identifying 2 candidates from the social sciences to run on a ballot for FEC Vice Chair. Twenty-six faculty members were approached, and all 26 declined. We were thus forced to delay this election until fall 2009.
8. Another challenging position to fill was Secretary of the Faculty. Thirteen faculty members turned down this opportunity.

Recommendations

1. We suggest that the FEC consider decreasing the numbers of faculty members needed for some committees, and revisit the issue of numbers of committees. Non-elected committees that were particularly difficult to staff include CMFA and Retirement.
2. We suggest that the FEC revisit the need for advisory boards, and consider reducing the numbers of faculty serving on these boards.
3. We suggest more concrete guidelines and timetables for committee and advisory board chairs approaching Nominations for replacements of members who take leave or resign. We often received requests to fill vacancies with little notice (for example, at mid-semester), with the expectation that the opening would be filled immediately. This was a particular problem in the case of advisory boards and committees related to undergraduate issues.

4. Several faculty members expressed to the Chair surprise at the workload of some committees, including those not requiring ballot elections. We suggest that a procedure be developed to assist the Nominations Committee in communicating to faculty volunteers more precise information about committee workloads. One way is to ask committee chairs to provide to the Nominations Committee a one paragraph summary of the time demands of that committee.
5. Some senior faculty expressed disappointment that they are automatically ineligible from serving on key committees just because they direct a Center, no matter how small. We suggest that FEC re-visit this eligibility issue.
6. We recommend that the FEC take up with the Administration the issue of providing incentives for faculty serving as faculty officers and as members of committees with particularly heavy workloads.

The Nominations Committee expresses deep appreciation to all faculty members who step forward to participate in faculty governance. We are grateful to the FEC for their support, and to Cheryl Moreau for her exemplary assistance.

Nominations Committee Members for 2008-09:

Andrea Simmons (Psychology), Chair
Evelyn Hu-Dehart (History/Ethnic Studies), Vice Chair
Elizabeth Harrington (Medicine)
Barrett Hazeltine (Engineering; one semester replacement for Jay Tang)
Nancy Jacobs (History/Africana Studies)
Jeffrey Muller (History of Art & Architecture)
Michal Oklot (Slavic Languages)
William R. Patterson (Engineering)
Jay Tang (Physics)
Hye-Sook Wang (East Asian Studies)