

Report of the Faculty Committee on Nominations for the 2007-08 Academic Year

November 2008

Background

The 2007-2008 academic year was the third year of operation of the Committee on Nominations.

Committee Activities

1. In the Fall semester, the Nominations Committee filled 20 positions vacated by faculty who either went on leave or resigned prior to serving a full term. Sixteen appointments were effective in the fall and four of them beginning January 1, 2008. The Committee also worked on the University Resources Committee ballot in consultation with the Provost recruiting 4 faculty members for the ballot election to fill two vacancies for appointments that began on March 1, 2008. The URC ballot election was held in February 2008.
2. The Nominations Committee spent the Spring semester filling ballot slates and committee memberships for vacancies anticipated on June 30, 2008. The Committee recruited 34 faculty to run in ballot elections for various committees, 17 faculty for regular committee assignments, 6 faculty as temporary replacements for faculty on leave, and filled a total of 4 faculty officer openings.
3. In addition to its core duties for nominating candidates for committee membership, the Nominations Committee worked with FEC to launch the faculty awards for excellence in university service. The Committee worked on the establishment of criteria for the awards and compiled the inaugural list of award recipients, which were presented in February 2008.
4. The Committee consulted with the Provost on nominations to URC and APC ballots, according to the recently revised procedures. The Committee also offered advice on nominations to several university boards.

Method of Operation

1. The Committee operated primarily via electronic communication and met as a group twice, once in each semester. Coordination was done by the Chairperson with expert assistance from Ms. Moreau. The Chairperson typically assigned searches to the two committee members from the relevant division and helped move the selection process forward. Nominations were vetted by e-mail before being brought before the Faculty or placed on a ballot.
2. The recipients of the awards for excellence in university service were selected by a subcommittee, chaired by E. Hu-Dehart.

Challenges

1. The work of the Nominations Committee in the 2007-08 was at least as challenging as in previous years, if not more so. As in previous years, the demand for membership to the numerous committees, boards, and other university bodies exceeded the availability of faculty who were willing to serve. Some observations

- a. It was relatively easier to identify candidates for membership to committees that have key consultative or decision making roles the university.
 - b. There was noticeable reluctance to agree to be a candidate for committees when a ballot was involved.
 - c. The distribution requirements for committee membership, such as university divisions and rank, posed additional challenges.
 - d. Semester-long leaves in addition to the full-year sabbatical leaves posed an increasingly felt challenge.
2. The Committee's interactions with the University Administration, for example in reference to APC and URC ballots, did not have the benefit of a clear set of guidelines. A similar comment applies to the Committee's interactions with FEC.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The faculty committee system is integral to faculty governance at Brown and a key component of the university's deliberations and decision making. As such, the faculty committee system deserves close attention and support.
2. The number of committees continues to be large. As a result, the level of responsibilities and the potential for impact range substantially among committees and affect faculty interest in serving as committee members. Fewer committees with more substantial roles and responsibilities will be in a better position to attract faculty interest and will arguably serve the university more effectively.
3. The requirements for committee constitution can be prohibitively complex. The faculty governance system can benefit from a relaxation of distribution requirements together with a re-examination of the list of committees requiring election by ballot.
4. A clearer delineation of the role of the Nominations Committee in its interactions with FEC and University Administration will be of value.
5. The Nominations Committee is ever appreciative of all faculty members who volunteer to take part in faculty governance, as members of committees or as candidates for such membership. We are particularly appreciative of those who do so in addition to multiple other service commitments. The Committee is particularly grateful for Ms. Moreau's assistance and role as institutional memory.

Nominations Committee Members for 2007-08:

Constantine Gatsonis (Community Health/Biostatistics), Chairperson
Peter Gromet (Geological Sciences)
Elizabeth Harrington (Medicine)
Evelyn Hu-Dehart (History/Ethnic Studies)
Jeffrey Muller (History of Art & Architecture)
John Savage (Computer Science)
Andrea Simmons (Psychology)
Susan Smulyan (American Civilization)
Hye-Sook Wang (East Asian Studies)