Faculty Senate Self-Assessment Committee
Recommendations for Senate
February 18, 2010

Members of the Committee: Larissa Fergeson (chair), William Stuart, Elizabeth Kocevar-Weidinger, James Haug, Glenda Taylor, Christopher Jones, David Shoenthal

Charge:
This committee will consider results from the self-assessment survey and will, by February 1, report proposals for changes in the composition and/or procedures of the Faculty Senate.

Committee recommendations:

1. **Improve communication between Faculty Senate and faculty**
    a. Communicate in multiple ways with faculty, in order to reach faculty with various communication preferences and to open up direct lines of communication to the faculty about substantive issues.   Foster transparency in communication and in policy-making.
    b. Create a communications team to assist the Senate Executive Committee, and particularly the Secretary who is responsible for much of the work of communication, in implementing these changes.
    c. Develop an electronic means for faculty to communicate with one another, i.e., a listserv or a blog
         i. IT now has software to create listservs; the work order is pending to create a listserv for Faculty Senate but FS needs to figure out who will "moderate" such a list.
        ii. The listserv should allow faculty to opt-out of the listserv.
        iii. Parameters need to be established for what topics can be discussed on the listserv, i.e. topics pertaining to faculty senate business (not yard sale ads or pets looking for a good home)
        iv. The job of the moderator(s) would be to screen for inappropriate content (like yard sale ads and pets looking for a good home).
         v. The upcoming Senate agenda, annotated to show questions or issues for discussion, should be published on the listserv at least one week prior to the Senate meeting so faculty have a chance to discuss the questions online.
        vi. The listserv should announce when the minutes of Faculty Senate are available and are posted to the website.   Use the listserv to provide some sense of the substance of the discussion at the meetings, not just the outcome of decisions.
        vii. A blog may also be helpful for communicating the substance of discussions at Faculty Senate to the faculty at large. Longwood has its own blogging platform available at http://greenwoodlibrary.org. There are security settings on these blogs so that the blog isn't public to the entire universe, if FS does not want it to be.

        viii.   In addition, a blog or the listserv could be used by the President's Advisory Committee and the faculty representative to the Board of Visitors to report to the faculty what happened at those meetings.

    d. Make the FS website more accessible and user friendly.

       i.   Have the Senate webpage conform to Red Dot, so it is more user friendly and appealing to all faculty, not just members of Senate.

      ii.   Have a link from the Longwood Academic Affairs webpage to the Faculty Senate webpage so the page is easier to locate for faculty.

     iii.   The website can also include links to the Faculty Senate of Virginia or other web pages that address issues of university governance.

     iv.   Have a way for faculty members to communicate their concerns directly to the Senate Executive Committee from the webpage.

      v.   The communications team needs to evaluate how public or private the webpage material needs to be.

    e. Increase the number of face-to-face meetings

       i.   Open up the Senate strategic planning process (see below) by holding a general faculty meeting early in the fall semester to discuss issues important to faculty and to help Senate plan its agenda for the year.

      ii.   Hold socials before or after Faculty Senate meetings to provide opportunities for senators to talk with one another more informally and to provide faculty with opportunities to interact with the members of Senate.

2. Be more proactive and engage in strategic planning about the Senate agenda for the year (or for two years).

    a. The Senate Executive Committee should solicit input from the general faculty and from Senators. (see 1.e.ii. above)

    b. Strategic planning will also help with maintaining momentum on issues from year-to-year as the Senate Executive Committee changes.

3. Evaluate the composition of the Senate and the way in which the Senate conducts business.

    a. Provide training for new senators

       i.   New senators are elected early enough in the spring semester that they could attend the last few meetings of the year with the current Senators. New senators could observe how Senate meetings are conducted and could learn about the most current issues before Senate.

      ii.   New senators should also attend an orientation session in which they can ask questions of Senate officers, learn about Robert Rules of Order, and learn about the responsibilities of being a Senator.

b. Based on concerns raised in the survey, this committee recommends that the Senate discuss the following questions:

    i. In re composition

        1. What is the role of administrators in the Senate? Should they be present at Faculty Senate meetings?

        2. What challenges do untenured faculty face on Senate that tenured faculty do not? Should there be rules about how many untenured or tenured faculty serve on Senate?

        3. Should term limits for Senators be revised?

        4. Do departments hold free and open elections of Senators?

    ii. In re conduct of business and debate

        1. Would using technology help to facilitate discussion? Should substantive motions or resolutions be projected on the screen so they could be read and seen by everyone?

        2. Should Senate provide additional opportunities for discussion of substantive issues among Senators that are less formal than debate using Robert Rules of Order? (the listserv and/or face-to-face socials may help with this)

        3. Do Senators need training in Robert Rules of Order?

        4. Are faculty satisfied with the structure of Senate Committees and how individuals are selected to serve on those committees? Are untenured and newer faculty given adequate opportunities to serve on university committees?

Have comments or questions? Please contact Larissa Fergeson at fergesonls@longwood.edu or at 2776.