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Protocol for the Faculty Assembly's Involvement In Academic Changes

February 4, 2009

Procedures

A. Collegiality

When developing proposals for the kinds of academic changes that will affect "curriculum and procedures of student instruction," faculty have an ethical and professional responsibility to be collegial.

If collegiality is defined as a collective or shared responsibility, then it is a way of working with other people. The process of making these changes should be done with openness and in a mutually respectful manner among faculty, even when there are strong differences of opinion. The end result of this collegiality is a sense of working together for a common purpose and following a fair process.

Something like this cannot be prescribed by reducing it to procedural steps. In spite of this difficulty, it is possible to say that a proposed change was made in a "collegial environment" whenever the following is the case:

> The President of the University, an academic administrator, or the Assembly has to make a decision about a proposal for an academic change and is confident of the following: (1) The full-time Teaching Faculty, departments, and programs that will be affected by the change have already seen it and have had an opportunity to give their input. (2) Disagreements or dissenting opinions about the proposal have been openly expressed and are available to those who have to make a decision about accepting or rejecting the proposal.

B. The Assembly's Involvement

1. **Executive Committee**
   The Faculty Assembly's constitution states the Assembly "shall have the right to advise the appropriate administrative officer on all matters concerning curriculum . . ." (A.1.d). The constitution further specifies that the Executive Committee "represents the interests of the Faculty Assembly when the Assembly is not in session . . ." and it "shall act as the steering committee of and prepare agenda for the meetings of the Faculty Assembly" (B.1). In view of these provisions in the Assembly's constitution, the Executive Committee shall have a managerial role in the presentation of proposed academic changes to the Assembly.

2. **Coordinating Committee for Proposed Academic Changes**
   The routine, day-to-day managerial role of the Executive Committee mentioned above is delegated to the Coordinating Committee for Proposed Academic Changes.

   a. **Charge.** The Coordinating Committee, as a delegated representative of the Executive Committee,

      (1) maintains an "electronic" system to notify the Assembly about proposed academic changes,
      (2) helps departments, programs, and others to put their proposals in a clear format for the system of notifying the Assembly,
      (3) facilitates faculty input on proposed changes after they are notified about the proposed change, and
      (4) insures that the Protocol process is followed.

      In addition, the Coordinating Committee
      (5) functions as an impartial facilitator and helper,
      (6) deals directly with faculty and administration in its management role as described above, except for anything that involves the agenda of an Assembly meeting (the prerogative of the Executive Committee),
      (7) keeps the Executive Committee informed about developments,
      (8) makes its own decisions concerning its meetings, hearings, formats, etc., and
      (9) defers to any directive from the Assembly or Executive Committee on any matter.

   b. **Membership.** A minimum of three members appointed by the Executive Committee from the full-time Teaching Faculty. Members of the Executive Committee may serve on the Coordinating Committee.

      The Executive Committee determines the length of a member's term. It may also add or remove members and add temporary members to assist with specific tasks. If a member of the Coordinating Committee has to be replaced temporarily because an issue arises concerning his/her own department or program, the Speaker of the Assembly may appoint a temporary replacement.

3. **Standing**
   The Assembly shall receive formal notification about, debate, or vote to endorse / recommend an academic change only if a group or individual with standing brings it to the Assembly. Those with standing shall include the following: (1) the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly, (2) a committee or ad hoc committee established or authorized by the Assembly or its Executive Committee, (3) a joint administration-faculty committee/commission on curriculum or other related matters, (4) a department or program presenting a proposal related to its department or program; (5) a member of the full-time Teaching Faculty who is

the only full-time faculty member of his/her department or program, and (6) the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee. The Assembly or Executive Committee may change this list.

If a member of the administration wishes to present a proposed change for debate and vote, the proposal is submitted to the Executive Committee which will decide on the best way to proceed.

Individuals or groups who do not have standing may request time at an Assembly meeting to present an idea for discussion but they may not offer anything related to academic changes for a formal notification, debate, or vote. They must work through a group or individual with standing. They may also ask the Executive Committee to set up a committee with standing.

C. Procedural Steps for the Assembly's Involvement

1. **Step 1 – Notification**

   a. **Sponsor**. The department Chair, program Director, Chair of a committee or an individual – in every case, someone representing an entity with standing – may *sponsor* a proposed academic change. Once the sponsor determines that the wording of a proposed change is ready to be posted for public comment, said sponsor will send it to the Coordinating Committee in the format required.

   b. The Assembly expects that a proposal for the following types of changes will be submitted ***for notification*** purposes when the sponsor determines it is ready for "publication:"

   - a new course
   - new majors and minors
   - new programs
   - a change in the required curriculum that would apply to most undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., the number of required courses for a degree)
   - any academic requirement or educational policy that applies to all or most undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., a new grading system)
   - any extraordinary type of curriculum or educational policy change
   - any prerequisite change in a department course if that change will affect a degree program or minor in another department or program
   - a change in the Core Curriculum that alters the Core's general intentions, plan or design. For example: changes in the Goals of the Core; a deletion or addition of a course in the Common Core
   - a change in a Core Complement course that will change a catalog entry (e.g., addition or deletion of)

- any curriculum change that a department or program believes others should know about.

Newsletter. The Coordinating Committee may also include in this notification process a newsletter, where the committee, departments, and programs may describe ("FYI") other information about academic changes and long-range curriculum plans.

As soon as possible, the Coordinating Committee notifies the Assembly "electronically" about the proposal it has received (e.g., by sending an updated email listing or by posting the information on a Web-page). Certain administrators and librarians, as delegates to the Assembly, would also receive this information. The committee may also send additional notification to pertinent committees and councils.

c. It is understood that the **administration** be consulted before anything is submitted to this notification process when a proposed change involves increased funding, new faculty, new equipment, a new direction for a department, etc. It is also understood that the administration might not be able to make an informed decision about accepting or rejecting a proposal until it hears reactions from faculty who will learn about a proposed change through this notification process.

d. The individual or group that has submitted a proposed change for notification may **withdraw** it or **update** it. The Coordinating Committee shall decide if the updating requires an extension of the minimum 30-day notification period (see below).

2. <u>Step 2 – Input</u>

After the notification described in Step 1 has been posted, faculty and administrators have an opportunity to do the following: contact the sponsors of the proposal, the Coordinating Committee, or the administration with their suggestions, questions, concerns, and objections. The Coordinating Committee shall report to the Assembly on input it has received. Someone who would like to make a make a written public comment on a proposal may request that the Coordinating Committee use its notification system to circulate that comment. The committee may reprint the entire comment, quote from it, or summarize it. Anonymous comments will not be circulated.

For a minimum of thirty days, the proposal is placed on the notification system and is open for this input. This minimum input period is suspended between June 1 and August 31, December 15 and January 15, and during Spring Break (i.e., the notification may be posted but the suspended days are not counted). The Coordinating Committee may make extensions and grant exceptions due to unforeseen circumstances.

Should there be an administrative veto of a proposal during this input period, the Coordinating Committee will publicly acknowledge such action.

3. Step 3 – The Assembly's Action

After the minimum thirty-day period for input (Step 2), the Assembly's involvement depends on these situations:

a. Assembly Vote Required

Situation: The importance of the proposal requires that it be placed on the agenda of a Faculty Assembly meeting for a vote to endorse or recommend it. The following are examples of proposals that the Assembly will vote on:

- new major, minor, or program
- a change in the required curriculum that would apply to most undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., the number of required courses for a degree)
- any academic requirement or educational policy that applies to all or most undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., a new grading system)
- a change in the Core Curriculum that alters the Core's general intentions, plan or design (e.g., changes in the Goals of the Core; a deletion or addition of a course in the Common Core)
- any type of curriculum or educational policy change that, in the opinion of the Coordinating Committee, is extraordinary.

In the above cases, the Executive Committee takes charge of the process after the notification period.

If this type of proposed change (i.e., vote required) is available on the notification system for a full thirty days and the Coordinating Committee has, in its opinion, received no serious concerns, complaints, objections, or requests for additional scrutiny during the input period, then a vote to recommend or endorse the proposal may be placed on the agenda of the next Assembly meeting and a "second reading" of the proposal at an Assembly meeting is not required, unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise.

b. Assembly Vote Not Required

Situation: During the input period, the Coordinating Committee has not received a request for additional scrutiny of a proposed change that does not require a vote of the Assembly. No further action of the Assembly is required. In effect, the Assembly's recommendation to the administration is this: The Assembly has been notified about the proposed change and has registered no objection to it.

c. Further Action Required

Situation: The Coordinating Committee has received serious concerns (complaints, objections, or requests for additional scrutiny) about a change that does not normally require an Assembly vote. In the committee's opinion, the input is significant enough to require further action in one of the following ways:

(1) The Coordinating Committee will ask those who have these concerns and the proposal's sponsors to meet, with or without a member of the committee, and resolve the issue. If this meeting resolves the concerns expressed, the proposal receives a "no objection" described in C.3.b above.

If there are material changes in the proposal as a result of this resolution process, the committee will decide if a new notification is needed and the length of time for posting the notification.

(2) If the Coordinating Committee cannot resolve the concerns through meetings or if the concerns come from several divergent sources, the committee may

- conduct open hearings / forums on the proposal, summarize its findings, and include them in the Assembly's notification system,
- decide that the matter has not been resolved and report this in the Assembly's notification system, or
- refer the matter to the Executive Committee.

The Coordinating Committee may extend the minimum 30-day notification period if additional time is needed.

d. Amending Proposals

The Assembly may only amend (make a change in) a proposed academic change that originated in a committee that reports to the Assembly or the Executive Committee. It may not amend any proposed academic change submitted by a department, program, council, commission, or committee that does not report to it or its Executive Committee. The Assembly may, however, offer suggestions or comments concerning a proposal but only in separate motions that are not part of a motion on the proposed change.

D. Changing Procedures

The Executive Committee is authorized to make changes in the above Protocol procedures, as long as it (1) reports the change to the Assembly, with a rationale, and (2) at the Assembly's next meeting, allows a motion to overturn or amend the change, if such a motion is offered. As stated in the "History" at the beginning of this Protocol, it is expected that this process and these procedures will evolve as necessary, in concert with the University's development.