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February 4, 2009

Protocol for the Faculty Assembly's Involvement In Academic Changes

Summary

In the fall semester 2007, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly appointed a committee to revise and update the "Protocol" for the Faculty Assembly's involvement in academic changes. The committee's unformatted draft for a revised Protocol is below.

The revised Protocol would consistently keep faculty and administration updated about various types of proposed academic changes by using a **notification system** (email and/or the Web).

The **Executive Committee** would be in charge of the process but would delegate the day-to-day management of it to a small Coordinating Committee.

This revision further develops two main ideas behind the original Protocol approved in 2000: (1) Faculty and administration should be kept informed about various types of proposed academic changes at the University. (2) In the 21st century, it makes more sense and is quicker to use email or the Web to "publish" lists of proposed changes that are ready for scrutiny, rather than wait for paperwork to go through a pipeline.

In this proposal, the notification system would keep the Faculty Assembly and the administration informed about various proposed changes. The Assembly would vote on relatively few types of proposed changes. (See lines 241-256 below.)

This revised Protocol is designed to be a helpful and informative service to departments, programs, and the administration.

History

Since its founding in 1999, the Faculty Assembly has participated in the approval process for some types of academic changes (for example, the development of the Core Curriculum and recommendations for new majors). In 2000 it authorized a set of guidelines for that participation: the *Protocol for the Faculty Assembly's Involvement in Changes Concerning Curriculum and Educational Policy*. This statement put great emphasis the importance of collegiality and openness when academic changes were being developed.

The 2000 Protocol was only the first step in a continuing process; *when, how, and if* the Assembly should be notified about certain types of proposed academic changes or act on those proposals are matters that will always have to evolve as the University evolves. The following Procedures for a new Protocol are a continuation of that evolutionary process.

43 For this Motion, the draft approved by the Protocol Revision Committee on
44 October 22, 2008 has been changed. The following words were added at lines
45 227-8: “The Coordinating Committee shall report to the Assembly on input it has
46 received.” The following words were removed from line 227-8: “If the
47 Coordinating Committee receives enough comments that it considers significant,
48 the committee may summarize them on the notification system.”

49
50 [End of History]

51
52 The Faculty Assembly’s constitution (approved by the Board of Trustees) reminds
53 faculty of a well-established principle in higher education: “When an educational
54 goal has been established, it becomes the responsibility primarily of the faculty to
55 determine appropriate curriculum and procedures of student instruction . . .” In
56 order to carry out this responsibility, the Faculty Assembly shall observe the
57 following Guidelines and Procedures for its involvement in academic changes that
58 pertain to “curriculum and procedures of student instruction.”

59

60 **Procedures [Not Formatted]**

61

62 **Collegiality**

63

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

67

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

73

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

77

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

86

87

88 **The Assembly’s Involvement**

Please note: the Faculty Assembly does not attempt to become involved in all proposed curriculum or academic changes. For a list of proposed changes that the Assembly expects to be **notified** about, see lines 177-198. For a list of changes that might result in a **vote** by the Assembly, see lines 250-265.

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.

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.

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

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

In addition, the Coordinating Committee

- functions as an impartial facilitator and helper,
- 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),
- keeps the Executive Committee informed about developments,
- makes its own decisions concerning its meetings, hearings, formats, etc., and
- defers to any directive from the Assembly or Executive Committee on any matter.

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

136
 137 The Executive Committee determines the length of a member's term. It may also
 138 add or remove members and add temporary members to assist with specific tasks.
 139 If a member of the Coordinating Committee has to be replaced temporarily
 140 because an issue arises concerning his/her own department or program, the
 141 Speaker of the Assembly may appoint a temporary replacement.

142
 143

144 ***Standing***¹

145 The Assembly shall receive formal notification about, debate, or vote to endorse /
 146 recommend an academic change only if a group or individual with standing brings it
 147 to the Assembly. Those with standing shall include the following: (1) the Executive
 148 Committee of the Faculty Assembly, (2) a committee or ad hoc committee established
 149 or authorized by the Assembly or its Executive Committee, (3) a joint administration-
 150 faculty committee/commission on curriculum or other related matters, (4) a
 151 department or program presenting a proposal related to its department or program; (5)
 152 a member of the full-time Teaching Faculty who is the only full-time faculty member
 153 of his/her department or program, and (6) the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee.
 154 The Assembly or Executive Committee may change this list.

155
 156
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 159

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.

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

165
 166

167 ***Procedural Steps for the Assembly's Involvement***

168

169 **Step 1 – Notification**

170

171 *Sponsor.* The department Chair, program Director, Chair of a committee or an
 172 individual – in every case, someone representing an entity with standing – may
 173 *sponsor* a proposed academic change. Once the sponsor determines that the wording
 174 of a proposed change is ready to be posted for public comment, said sponsor will send
 175 it to the Coordinating Committee in the format required.²

¹ Based on 2000 Protocol.

² Required format as yet to be determined by the Committee.

176
177 The Assembly expects that a proposal for the following types of changes will be
178 submitted *for notification* purposes when the sponsor determines it is ready for
179 “publication:”

- 180
- 181 • a new course
- 182 • new majors and minors
- 183 • new programs
- 184 • a change in the required curriculum that would apply to most
- 185 undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., the number of required courses
- 186 for a degree)
- 187 • any academic requirement or educational policy that applies to all or most
- 188 undergraduate or graduate students (e.g., a new grading system)
- 189 • any extraordinary type of curriculum or educational policy change
- 190 • any prerequisite change in a department course if that change will affect a
- 191 degree program or minor in another department or program
- 192 • a change in the Core Curriculum that alters the Core’s general intentions,
- 193 plan or design. For example: changes in the Goals of the Core; a deletion
- 194 or addition of a course in the Common Core
- 195 • a change in a Core Complement course that will change a catalog entry
- 196 (e.g., addition or deletion of)
- 197 • any curriculum change that a department or program believes others
- 198 should know about.
- 199

200 “*Newsletter*”: The Coordinating Committee may also include in this
201 notification process a newsletter, where the committee, departments, and
202 programs may describe (“FYI”) other information about academic changes
203 and long-range curriculum plans.
204

205 As soon as possible, the Coordinating Committee notifies the Assembly
206 “electronically” about the proposal it has received (e.g., by sending an updated email
207 listing or by posting the information on a Web-page). Certain administrators and
208 librarians, as delegates to the Assembly, would also receive this information. The
209 committee may also send additional notification to pertinent committees and councils.
210

211 It is understood that the administration be consulted before anything is submitted to
212 this notification process when a proposed change involves increased funding, new
213 faculty, new equipment, a new direction for a department, etc. It is also understood
214 that the administration might not be able to make an informed decision about
215 accepting or rejecting a proposal until it hears reactions from faculty who will learn
216 about a proposed change through this notification process.
217

218 The individual or group that has submitted a proposed change for notification may
219 withdraw it or update it. The Coordinating Committee shall decide if the updating
220 requires an extension of the minimum 30-day notification period (see below).
221

Step 2 – Input

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 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.

Step 3 – The Assembly’s Action

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

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.

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

270
271 If this type of proposed change (i.e., vote required) is available on the
272 notification system for a full thirty days and the Coordinating Committee has,
273 in its opinion, received no serious concerns, complaints, objections, or
274 requests for additional scrutiny during the input period, then a vote to
275 recommend or endorse the proposal may be placed on the agenda of the next
276 Assembly meeting and a “second reading” of the proposal at an Assembly
277 meeting is not required, unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise.

278

279 **Assembly Vote Not Required**

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

286

287

288

Further Action Required

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

294

295 (1) The Coordinating Committee will ask those who have these concerns
296 and the proposal’s sponsors to meet, with or without a member of the
297 committee, and resolve the issue. If this meeting resolves the concerns
298 expressed, the proposal receives a “no objection” described in [lines
299 279-85] above.

300

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

304

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

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- conduct open hearings / forums on the proposal, summarize its findings, and include them in the Assembly’s notification system,³
 - 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.

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

318

319 **Amending Proposals**

320 [Based on the 2000 Protocol.] The Assembly may only amend (make a change in)
321 a proposed academic change that originated in a committee that reports to the
322 Assembly or the Executive Committee. It may not amend any proposed academic
323 change submitted by a department, program, council, commission, or committee
324 that does not report to it or its Executive Committee. The Assembly may,
325 however, offer suggestions or comments concerning a proposal but only in
326 separate motions that are not part of a motion on the proposed change.

327

328 **Changing Procedures**

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

³ The Assembly does not always have the time to discuss important issues at its regular meetings. For this reason, the Coordinating Committee or the Executive Committee will set up hearings or forums where issues of concern and proposed changes can be discussed.