University Council Committee on Committees Report on the Functioning of Council Committees During Academic Year 2009-10

Chair: Robert Hornik
Staff: Susan White, Brenda Brand
Members: Faculty: Sherri Adams, Harvey Rubin, Terry Richmond, Ellis Golub, Jeff Winkler; and; PPSA representative Ken Grcich, WPSA representative: Loretta Hauber, UA representative: Ben Moskowitz, GAPSA representative: Lee Solomon

Mechanism of evaluation
Each faculty member on the Committee on Committees was assigned to review a Council committee. Each review consisted of in-person, phone, or email interviews, typically with the committee chair, administrative liaison, and staff support person, using the questions below. In some cases other members of the committees were asked for responses to these questions as well. Other University constituencies were asked to provide information on committee performance via their members who serve on the committees. All committee members then reported their findings to the Committee on Committees in March for discussion. This report provides an overview of the general findings, as well as specific comments on the functioning of each committee. However, Steering is advised to look at the individual committee reports to gain a complete view of how the committees are performing.

Questions Posed to Each Committee Chair
1. Was the committee's specific charge for this year clear and appropriate?
2. What changes, if any, do you think need to be made in the committee's general charge?
3. What issues were addressed this year and were they resolved?
4. How many times did the full committee meet? If subcommittees were created, how many were created, how often did they meet, and what was their purpose?
5. Based on the charges for this year, and the discussion to date, what do you see as issues emerging for consideration next year?
6. Which members would you recommend to serve on the committee next year? Is there anyone on the current committee who is the logical successor as chair, either now or in the future?
7. Is the membership of the committee well suited to the committee’s charge?
   (Expertise, representation of interests, etc.)
8. What was the role of the administration’s liaison in your committee?
9. Whom has the committee consulted or met with during the past year?
10. What problems did the committee encounter, e.g., access to necessary resources?
11. Last year committee chairs expressed concern about the lack of responses to their recommendations. There were steps taken this year to provide feedback to the committee about responses to its previous year’s work and to provide an ongoing communication channel with the administration: 1) the Tri-Chairs met with the President and Provost to discuss the committee’s report recommendations and forwarded the responses to the committee chairs at the orientation meeting in September and 2) each committee now has an appointed liaison to the committee
from the administration to provide feedback at each committee meeting. Do you believe that those represent adequate feedback mechanisms for the committee?

12. What recommendations would you make going forward?

13. Is there any question that should have been asked that was not included?

Overall comments:

There were three overarching issues that were important to address across the committees: whether they felt that they were actually able to deal with the range of their charges; whether the functioning of the committees was advanced by the presence of an administrative liaison, separately from the staffing for the committees previously provided; and whether the committees felt that their deliberations and conclusions were getting appropriate attention and feedback.

- The ability of each committee to deal with the breadth of its charges varied by committee and is addressed below within each report. However as will be noted below, the Committee on Academic and Related Affairs reports particular concern about its ability to deal with all of the issues in its charge on a regular basis.

- This past summer, for the first time, the Faculty Senate Tri-Chairs met with the President and Provost to specifically review each of the committee recommendations from 2008-2009. Those responses were then communicated directly to committee chairs at the start of the 2009-2010 academic year. This feedback was considered quite valuable and the committees recommend the continuation of this process. However, in some cases, committee members were not aware of the responses to their previous recommendations; this would suggest that the reporting about the responses to recommendations may need to be done in a more formal way and extend beyond the committee chair.

- The appointment of a formal administrative liaison to each committee was valued by the committees. For those committees where the liaisons were able to attend they were a major source for information and for links with others on campus with relevant information. They were sometimes able to move committee agenda issues forward, as well. In a small number of cases the appointed liaisons were unable to participate fully, with some cost to the committee functioning. It will be important to assure that these roles are fully engaged for the coming year.

An additional general concern appeared to affect some committees: the inconsistent attendance at meetings of student representatives. This might reflect a variety of causes including schedules conflicting with demands of academic life.

- The committee recommended that GAPSA and the UA consider structural approaches to resolving this concern to assure continued student representation on committees. For example, at the very start of the semester (or in the previous year) alternate student representatives be named, and serve as a permanent replacement if the primary representative needed to be replaced.

**The University Council Committee on Academic & Related Affairs (CARA):**

General Comments:
As in the past some interviewees expressed concern about the breadth of charges for this committee. That general charge includes admissions, bookstore, international programs, libraries, athletics and research policy, with specific charges in this year addressing admissions outreach to minority populations, podcasting, health of students and faculty overseas.

The administrative liaison was well regarded; there was some concern about the level of staffing in support of the committee’s work. Presentations concerning podcasting and international study were well regarded; the presentation on admissions issues, and the inability to obtain follow-up information from admissions was frustrating for the committee. The breadth of the charges appears to have left the committee with some frustration about its ability to explore any of these issues in depth. Some committee members suggested that they were not aware of the responses to previous recommendations.

- Formal presentation of the responses of the administration to committee recommendations should be clearly communicated to the committee as it receives its new charges in the beginning of the new year. Particularly as new members joint the committee formally re-stating the previous year’s charges, the recommendations and responses would be welcome.
- The committee should be strongly encouraged to form subcommittees with responsibility in particular areas of the committee’s charge. The subcommittees do not have to be made up only of members of the committee, although including one or two committee members on subcommittees would facilitate integration. [While CARA members have suggested that the responsibility for the charges be divided among new committees of the Council this would require changes in University bylaws; the committee on committees considers such a recommendation premature, preferring to examine whether an effective subcommittee structure might not resolve these concerns.]

The University Council Committee on Campus & Community Life

General Comments:
The committee examined a wide range of issues and seems to have functioned well. It met with staff people across a number of areas. It expects to produce specific recommendations resulting from its charges relating to dining services, bicycle traffic, and aspects of University cultural life. A particular concern with housing for students was to lead to the development of a subcommittee, but given feedback from GAPSA about a lack of concern in this area, the committee decided that this was unnecessary.

The Administrative Liaison was not able to attend committee meetings. Student representatives did not attend consistently.

- The Administration should appoint a different Administrative Liaison for the next year.
- Consistent with the general recommendation above, some mechanism to assure a higher level of student engagement with the committee would be valuable.

The University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity
General Comments:
The Committee functioned well overall, working in part in subcommittees focused on sub-issues in the committee’s charge. Joint meetings among a subgroup of the U.C. Diversity and Equity committee and the Senate Committee on Faculty Development, Diversity, and Equity with regard to faculty diversity issues have continued. There was substantial appreciation for the work of the Administrative Liaison and staff, but there continues to be a concern that some items on the diversity agenda, particularly the diversity website, have been stalled by the fact that an Affirmative Action officer for the University has not been appointed. The committee will likely recommend that, in the absence of such an appointment, alternative paths forward for these agenda items be developed. Overall the committee was satisfied with the feedback received from its recommendations in the previous year, although all members were not clear as to what those responses has been.

The University Council Committee on Facilities:
General Comments: The committee addressed a fairly wide range of issues. Overall the committee worked well, forming two subcommittees focused on ‘green’ issues and pedestrian/bicycle issues. There were concerns expressed about the overlapping charge of this committee with other committees concerned with traffic flows on campus (the Committee on Campus and Community Life also examined issues related to bicycle traffic.) There was minimal involvement of the undergraduate member, and some faculty members. Appreciation was expressed for the helpfulness of the Administrative Liaison and staff person for the committee. While the committee recognized that they had gotten feedback about their recommendations for the previous year, they did believe that very many of their recommendations had been implemented. Some interviewees expressed concern that low levels of attendance may be reduced with alternative mechanisms for organizing attendance (doodle, video participation.)
- Undergraduate student participation should be improved as discussed under general recommendations.
- Faculty should be appointed who are committed to attending meetings throughout the year.

The University Council Committee on Personnel Benefits

General comments:
The committee felt that their specific charges were clear and appropriate. In general the committee seems to have functioned effectively and collaborated closely with its administrative liaisons. (Leny Bader was the official liaison but Jack Heuer was clearly engaged as well.) It addressed a wide range of specific issues over 7 actual and planned meetings: health and welfare initiatives for active employees for fiscal year 2010, changes made in the retiree medical plan for calendar year 2010, adoption benefits, changes in group life insurance, developing proposals for changes in the tuition assistance program for employees, experience thus far with Aetna Health Connections Plan to better manage chronic health conditions, Caremark prescription drug benefit
utilization and Extra Health-Care Card and how the university will implement the federal mental-health parity law which was passed last year.

Tuition assistance for employees remains a somewhat frustrating issue for some committee members. Previous recommendations for extended benefits have not been accepted, with current financial concerns a major impediment. The issue of transgender benefits remains on the agenda as well. While the committee functioned quite well, there may be a need to bring on active faculty along with emeritus faculty to assure that the interests of both groups are represented.