

The
UMKC
Faculty
Senate

Report

The Voice of the U.M.K.C. Faculty

October 15 & November 5, 2002

Governance issues (continued)

Note: This is a report on two meetings. Your Secretary apologizes for his tardiness, but another deadline loomed. In any case, the two meetings were both concerned with governance issues, so the combined report works well.

The Chancellor and Provost were at both meetings. At the first meeting Chancellor Gilliland discussed her conception of campus governance, and focused on the Extended Cabinet. She was restructuring that body to better meet its goals, and asked for Senate input into that process.

Gilliland said the role of the Extended cabinet was to impact the network of conversations. She is an advocate of theories which claim that an organization exists in the dialogs, conversations and language it uses. (In a letter Gilliland said she likes Heidegger's phrase that "language is our house of being.") The Chancellor argued that if you can change the language - change the conversations - you change the organization. She used the example of cigarettes. The physical act of smoking (lighting the cigarette, inhaling, etc.) was the same in the 1950s as it is today. But, the dialogue about the act - the symbolic interpretation - would now be very different. Then the act was framed by the Marlboro Man, while today it is framed as a health issue. People interpret the physical action differently and talk about it differently. Because of that they have changed their behavior.

The Chancellor argued that if conversations determine the nature of an organization, and we continue to have cynical conversations at UMKC, we will maintain the same institution. She said the Extended Cabinet was intended to turn conversations into positive action. The conversations were to be about the future, and she wanted people to move away from complacency and cynicism towards seeing possibilities

We're Back in Print. :-)

In theory it was good to be available in a digital format. It was faster and cheaper. In practice, though, the electronic version was less visible than a hard copy, so we decided to go back to a print version of *The Faculty Senate Report*.

We are still retaining the web postings at the Faculty Senate Website. Important documents are there too, so be sure to visit. (<http://www.umkc.edu/fsenate>)

and moving into action. Gilliland wants to improve the structure of the Extended Cabinet so it can better achieve this goal, and asked for Senate input. She said participation in the BluePrint workshops would not be a criterion for membership. The original members of the Extended Cabinet came from the BluePrint workshops because she viewed the workshops as part of leadership development.

Senators made several suggestions (have more flexible scheduling so it would be easier for faculty to participate, deal with more concrete issues, change the structure

of the meetings) and will revisit the subject after they have had time to think about it. Some questioned the value of the organization itself.

Report and discussion about the Plan for the Reduction of Academic Costs (RedAC)

The RedAC report is a system wide planning document on how costs could be reduced, given the decline in the state budget and expected future reductions. The entire report is posted on the Faculty Senate Web Site (<http://www.umkc.edu/fsenate>) and might be of great importance. Several points were emphasized during the discussion:

- * The Report says it is not easy to save money by closing programs or schools. These generate revenue, and often pay for themselves. Additionally, courses in one program often serve students who are enrolled in other programs.
- * There are some people in the system who teach only one or two courses a year and have no administrative responsibilities and don't seem to do much research. These need to be investigated, and some kind of a teaching load policy seems to be needed. On the other hand, there are so many variations in programs and needs that a universal policy is not feasible.
- * Several Senators thought that the sports programs were an obvious place for reductions, since one large pot of money went for sports scholarships.

Dean evaluation delay requested & rejected

The Provost sent a letter to the Academic Affairs Committee requesting that the evaluation of deans be delayed until the evaluation questionnaire could be studied. He said he hadn't really examined the instrument but that some felt the evaluations reflected/encouraged too much of a complaint culture. Some people had raised red flags about the questionnaire, and he thought it should be reexamined prior to its use this year.

Almost all the Senators who spoke thought we should go ahead with the evaluations. The instrument had been used for many years and had been tested and refined over time. There was a historical base of answers, so current data could be compared to that of previous years. They argued that the historical base was extremely valuable and should not be easily dismissed. Another argument focused on the requirement that students evaluate faculty. Did we trust their evaluation ability more than the faculty's? Senators agreed that the instrument could probably be improved - it has slowly been modified and perfected over the years - but even if it is imperfect it had value. It allowed deans to see what the faculty thought. It probably didn't create a negative atmosphere, but it might reflect one, and that type of information was important

The Senate felt that there was no reason to delay the evaluations and voted overwhelmingly to go ahead with the process. Evaluating upper level administrators is also being studied.

The Provost asked whether evaluations of deans that intended to resign should go ahead. The Senate thought that should be left up to the faculty of the unit involved. Under some circumstances faculty might feel it was a waste of time, but since Dean evaluations were the only formal input that faculty had they might want to go ahead with an evaluation as an expression of opinion or as a way of delineating problems.

Interim dean appointment process

The process of appointing interim deans was discussed, since several had been appointed without faculty approval or adequate input. Some argued that the appointment of deans was a basic element of shared governance that had been trampled on by the administration. They argued that a dean is a dean, regardless of the modifiers (interim, temporary, acting) that are placed before the title. Others thought the appointment process for interim deans needed to be more flexible than the process of appointing a permanent dean,

There was a broad discussion of the process. Some felt that the rules had to be more flexible for interim deans, since there was a short time in which a decision had to be made, and sometimes there were special problems that needed to be dealt with. Others felt that if faculty were to be bypassed there should be a written justification explaining the reasons. Others suggested that we needed to look at good practice, not only the law. If an interim dean was appointed without the approval of faculty s/he would have a difficult time working with the faculty - if they process didn't engage the faculty it would lead to trouble.

We decided to have the Academic Affairs Committee study the whole problem. Perhaps the procedure could be explained in a faculty handbook rather than attempting to change the bylaws. It was noted that all this involved a tremendous amount of work, and that work on some committees was time-consuming but was not reflected in the workload policy. We needed to examine this issue in the future.

Tenure and promotion committee

Tenure and promotion decisions are a responsibility of the faculty, and some members of the campus promotion and tenure committee felt that the Provost had designated a chair that was trying to usurp the power of the faculty in this area. They argued that the committee should select its own chair, and that any administrator should simply serve as staff to the committee, convening the meetings, getting rooms, etc. Some Senators, who were on the Promotion and Tenure Committee, said they had missed the last meeting but were unaware of any problems. Another, who was at the meeting, later wrote and said that he also was unaware of any issues. He wrote, "the only changes, as I understand them, are that Ballard requested a meeting with the committee after final votes were taken to understand better the reasons for the committee's vote, especially in cases where the vote was split. His goal was to get a better feel for the committee's reasoning on some candidates. "

The Provost said that Larry Kaptain was simply trying to carry on past practices. His intentions might have been misunderstood, or he might have expressed them incorrectly. In any case, this quickly became a non-issue when the Provost said he would let the committee determine its own structure. The Senate thought that approach was the correct one, so we terminated the discussion and voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Harris Mirkin,
Faculty Secretary