Kathleen,

I would like to request that at the January 21 meeting the Faculty Senate reconsider its decision to become a part of the Extended Cabinet. After thinking about this decision during the Christmas break and after having an opportunity to read the Chancellor’s “New Extended Cabinet” document, I would like to raise three related arguments against this decision:

1. The Faculty Senate needs to be the formal body for interaction between elected faculty representatives, on the one hand, and the Provost and Chancellor on the other. This needs to be the center for faculty participation in shared governance at the University level—and for exchanges between faculty representatives and senior administrators.

2. Whether one thinks that there is a conflict of interest for an individual Senator to serve on the Extended Cabinet, there is definitely a conflict of interest for the Senate as a body to serve on the Extended Cabinet. The Extended Cabinet was established to further the Chancellor’s agenda for change (whether it be called the “Blueprint” or not). As I read the Chancellor’s description of the purpose of the “New Extended Cabinet”, that does not appear to have changed. The Faculty Senate as a whole (regardless of commitments made by individual Senators apart from their formal duties as Senators) must remain independent of administrative direction and control. Even nominally agreeing as a body to the terms for service on the “New Extended Cabinet” undermines that independence. As a matter of fact, as one who fundamentally disagrees with the Chancellor’s “vision” and with her method of promoting change, I do not feel able as a Senator to agree to what she calls the “Accountabilities of Extended Cabinet Members”, and I will not serve on the “New Extended Cabinet”.

3. Ellen has forcefully argued on multiple occasions about the need for faculty members to be involved in the work of shared governance in order to make it viable. I have thought a great deal about her argument during the past several months. As I have reflected, I have come to several provisional conclusions. Two which appear to have direct bearing in this case are: 1) a relatively small minority of faculty appear to do most of the work in shared governance, and 2) faculty commitment of time is necessarily finite and often fluctuating (relatively heavy involvement followed by less engagement). If it can be assumed that these conclusions are accurate, what will be the repercussions of taking on yet another potentially time-consuming commitment for the Senate? How will taking on this commitment affect other time-intensive activities needed to strengthen the Senate like (to give one example) developing a strong standing budget committee? I would argue that any kind of substantial commitment as a body to participation in the “New Extended Cabinet” will seriously drain the limited amounts of time Senators have to devote to Senate work. If this decision threatens the independence of the Senate, it also threatens Senators’ allocation of time to the Senate, with time already being a precious commodity. With a declining number of tenure-line faculty to perform governance functions next year, time will be even more precious.

Stuart McAninch