

Faculty Governance Committee
Minutes for November 12, 2008

Present: Robert Entenmann, Jonathan Hill, Kris MacPherson, Erik Lane, James May, Diana Neal, Bruce Nordstrom-Loeb, Arnie Ostebee, Wes Pearson, Steve Reece, James McKeel

Jonathan Hill called the meeting to order at 3:38 pm.

1. The minutes of the meeting on October 22, 2008 were approved.
2. Jonathan Hill summarized, and commented on, five Discussion Points related to Nominating and Electoral Procedures for College-Wide Faculty Committees that he had sent to Faculty Governance Committee (FGC) members prior to this meeting:

Why should faculty serve on committees?
How should we nominate faculty for election onto faculty committees?
How long should committee terms of office be?
How should we vote?
How should we count votes?

A general broad-ranging discussion on the nomination and electoral procedures for faculty committees followed, covering the following questions and ideas:

–In regard to systems for nominating and electing faculty, we could

- (a) follow our present system;
- (b) adopt a system of non-elected, rotational appointments;
- (c) adopt the Carleton system; or
- (d) find another system such as the Harvey Mudd system described by Arnie Ostebee (Harvey Mudd, one of the Claremont Colleges, is a private liberal-arts college focusing on mathematics, the physical and biological sciences, and engineering).

FGC members questioned whether, given the size of St Olaf, we could adopt either the Carleton or Harvey Mudd systems, notwithstanding their inclusive and egalitarian nature. Any system of constituting committees by appointment strayed too far from the St Olaf's democratic tradition.

–There was a need to maintain a balance of faculty on committees, and there was also a need to identify and bring forward as candidates faculty who were less known and yet were qualified and had a strong desire to serve on committees.

–Should we create committees out of a combination of appointed and elected members? The proportion could be half of each, or one third appointed and two thirds elected, or some other combination. The faculty would elect, the FGC appoint. Further discussion suggested that whatever anomalies a hybrid system such as this might lessen could, in fact, be rectified by reducing the terms of office from three to two years.

–Should we reduce terms of office on committees from three years to two? Recent Nominating Committees have reported how difficult it is to find faculty willing, or able, to commit to three year terms (given such matters as sabbaticals, special leaves, leading overseas programs, and so forth). A reduction to two years would increase the pool of potential candidates. This would increase the turnover of committee membership and so broaden faculty participation in committee work. Members felt, however, that the terms of office on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, where continuity of service and accumulative experience were especially important, should remain at three years. The FGC felt that, if we moved to two-year terms, incumbents on a committee should be permitted to run for a second consecutive term.

–The FGC felt that data on faculty committee service, for both elected and appointed committees, could provide helpful guidance, and that it should be made public and subject to faculty scrutiny and correction.

–In considering nominations and in creating ballots, the FGC could send a list of open committee positions to faculty and chairs and invite suggestions and volunteers. Those faculty whose service record seemed light might be especially encouraged to stand for office. The FGC were impressed, on the basis of the data it already had, by the wide distribution of current and past faculty on various college-wide committees.

–Should we leave open the possibility of last minute nominations from the floor, or should we institute a seven-day rule for final nominations? There was discussion about potential disenfranchisement of faculty members who could not be at the faculty meeting; a seven-day rule for final nominations might be a more equitable resolution.

–FGC members agreed that ballots should include a list of faculty currently serving on committees, a list of returning members of a committee, and the names of nominees.

3. If the FGC's discussions on nominating and election procedures end up requiring changes to the Faculty Manual, and if such changes are to be implemented in this current academic year (the Board of Regents will meet in early February 2009), then green sheets must go to the faculty at the December meeting. Jonathan suggested he might, for the benefit of the faculty, put a statement on the web related to voting procedures, terms of office, and term limits.

4. The next FGC meeting will be held on November 19 and will continue with the preceding discussion.

5. A decision will be made on November 19 to determine if an additional December 3rd FGC meeting will be necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Neal
Secretary pro tem