

Faculty Governance: 2003-2004
Annual Report to the Board Of Trustees
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It has been a relatively quiet year in faculty governance. While a great deal of work has been going on in the committees many of the more contentious issues of the past seem to have been resolved. This report summarizes the year's activities.

Call to Engagement: At the first senate meeting of the year, President Lehman described his proposed call to engagement. In late November we had a faculty discussion about the teaching section of his call and that resulted in a group summary and a number of individual comments from faculty.

The Financial Policy Committee: The University has made substantial progress in improving faculty salaries in both the endowed and statutory units. It still remains to be seen, however, whether there is pay equity in disciplines across college boundaries; that study is on-going. In addition to monitoring the favorable changes in faculty salaries, the committee has been examining the issue of tuition and financial aid. They were very pleased that a recent study showed that Cornell was number two among the 100 most selective universities in the number of Pell grants awarded our students. Further, the distribution of these grants was relatively uniform among the various Cornell colleges. This implies that we are being relatively successful in recruiting students from low-income families.

Strategic Corporate Alliance: The University has proposed to form strategic corporate alliances with firms that might hope to benefit from Cornell's expertise in various disciplines. The plan was shared with the senate last year and considered in some detail by one of the senate's committees, the Local Advisory Committee. Some faculty were clearly uneasy with the concept of a for-profit business financing a large portfolio of Cornell research; a faculty forum was held in the early fall to allow faculty to discuss and consider their reservations about the proposal. As a result, an ad-hoc committee was established to consider what aspects of such an agreement should be resolved before the faculty committee approved its adoption. The committee produced a report which was discussed with VP for Research, Bob Richardson and then reported to the Faculty Senate. In many cases the committee simply reinforced existing Cornell policy, in others it raised issues about which there is continued discussion. The committee plans to share the details of the plan with senate members and department chairs and suggest that some consideration of these issues take place at the department level. I anticipate that these guidelines will return to the whole senate for action sometime during the next academic year.

Whatever happens about the details of the plan, the process will have been discussed broadly among the faculty. Thus any corporate agreement can be considered in a thoughtful and careful way and should not take the faculty by surprise.

Library Resolution: One of the serious problems that the library faces is the continued escalation of prices charged by the commercial publishers of scientific journals. A particularly egregious example is that of Elsevier. They have bought up many of the companies that publish scholarly journals and then offer the libraries to chance to purchase a “bundle” of the journals both in their paper as well as electronic form. The cost of this bundle has increased dramatically over the years but libraries wishing to discontinue individual journal subscriptions to save costs have found that it did not save them money to do so. Sarah Thomas and her colleagues decided to abandon the bundle and return to individual journal subscriptions. Elsevier representatives visited Cornell urging both the library and the library faculty advisory committee not to pursue that course. But the library held fast, leading a parade of other university libraries to follow our example. The Faculty Senate unanimously passed a resolution supporting the libraries efforts.

FACTA: The Faculty Advisory Committee on Tenure Appointments advises the provost on proposed promotions to tenure. This is a very busy and hard working committee that dealt with 49 cases this year. Four committee members read each dossier and prepare a one page summary. If any reader has questions or concerns about a particular case, the entire committee meets with the provost to discuss them. In an effort to reduce the workload the provost and the committee suggested that it not review the cases of faculty with tenure that are transferring to Cornell unless they are requested to do so by the provost. Experience has shown that most of these cases are quite straightforward and by omitting FACTA review it would not only ease the committee workload but also speed the appointment process. This change was approved by the Faculty Senate.

Status of non-tenure track faculty: An ad hoc committee has been considering the status of non-tenure track faculty. There are substantial numbers of lecturers, research associates and senior research associates in the various colleges. The committee held a series of open meetings to hear suggestions from this group and has been busily discussing ideas in the past few months. They have also been considering a proposal from the Engineering College for the establishment of two new research ranks, Research Scientist and Principal Research Scientist. They plan to bring at least part of their report and recommendations to the May meeting of the senate.

Suspension: Former Dean of the Faculty, Robert Cooke, found that there was no legislation concerning a college dean’s ability to suspend a faculty member from his or her duties either with or without pay. The Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Status of the Faculty has drafted a possible policy that accords with that of our peer institutions and follows the AAUP guidelines. This has been discussed at a dean’s meeting and a group of three deans has agreed to meet with the APFS committee to work out details.

Educational Policy Committee: The scheduling of final examinations is an issue that causes student stress. Under the current system many students have several examinations in a row, indeed sometimes two or three in one day. Dean Cooke established a committee headed by Prof. Robert Bland in operations research. Using data from the registrar this group has come up with a new scheduling algorithm which should greatly reduce the number of conflicting exams and result in fewer examinations on the same day. They have discussed their proposal with the student assembly where it was endorsed enthusiastically. They must now bring it to the EPC and the Faculty Senate before working with the registrar to implement it in the Spring term of 2005.

Inclusive University Club: A committee headed by Peter Stein has been considering the establishment of a University Club to replace the current Faculty Club. They submitted a preliminary report to the president and the provost last summer. A functional club would enhance communication among the faculty and staff and foster relationships across the university by providing a pleasant and congenial place for lunch. The current faculty club is very small, tucked in a small corner of the Statler and has had a declining membership. Last year the Faculty Senate endorsed exploring the proposal and this summer an outside committee of experts will visit Cornell to evaluate the situation and offer advice.

This year has seen an extraordinary increase in the number of alleged academic dishonesty cases among the faculty. I have been involved in five cases in my first 9 months; Bob Cooke had only one! Most of these cases are without foundation but one or two represented legitimate controversies about authorship. In addition, I have handled two appeals for tenure and promotion.

Faculty governance has worked hard to establish good working relations with the administration of the University. As a result we are working together to resolve problems. On a personal level, I would like to say what a pleasure it has been to work with President Lehman and Provost Martin. They have both been enormously open, helpful and supportive. Their willingness to help with faculty concerns has not only made my job easier but also has greatly benefited faculty governance.