

Annual Report 2015-2016 – Nominations and Elections Committee
Chair: Michael Fontaine

In 2015-6 (my fourth and final year as chair), Nominations and Elections continued its success in staffing the many shared governance committees of the university faculty senate. Thanks to the help of Andrea Smith in the DOF office, we continued to streamline our procedures. We met in person as a committee less frequently than in the past and for shorter periods of time, but typically covered as much ground as in the past. Thereafter Andrea would ask colleagues on our behalf to serve, and many said yes. As in the past, we continued to seek diverse representation from across all units at the university on all committees.

An exception to these successes in filling committees has been finding colleagues willing to serve on the University Assembly committees. Going forward, Nominations and Elections may want to rethink the role faculty play, or should play, on these committees.

In 2015-6 our committee also conducted faculty senate elections, including the triennial elections of a new Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean of Faculty (my own role), and Faculty Trustee. I am pleased to report that the committee ran the most competitive election for these leadership positions in living memory, as well as the most diverse (data are available at this link: <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/2016%20ELECTION/2016electionresults.html>). This success was the result of a deliberate decision by the committee. After generating an initial slate of candidates for these positions, the committee decided it did not sufficiently represent the diversity of Cornell University as a whole. It therefore declined to advance the initial slate and instead reopened the period for new nominations. I advertised the new nomination period via an email to all faculty, and it resulted in a number of new nominations, some of which were ultimately accepted.

One question that came before the committee was whether emeritus faculty were eligible to stand for election as Dean of Faculty. Our legislation states that the Dean of Faculty must be a tenured member of the faculty. Since emeritus faculty relinquish tenure, a strict reading of the legislation would make emeritus faculty ineligible to stand for election. The committee inclined to the opposite view, however, and thought the spirit of the legislation was meant to exclude pre-tenure and non-tenure-track faculty. Nevertheless, because the faculty member who sought clarification on this issue was not yet emeritus at the time of his candidacy, the committee did not issue a formal ruling on the question. In the view of the committee, there is nothing problematic about a Dean of Faculty accepting promotion to emeritus status during his or her tenure as Dean.