

Faculty Forum  
presented by the Executive Committee of the AASU Faculty  
Faculty Governance

Minutes of Forum 1A  
Wednesday, February 23, 2005  
Solms 108

The forum was called to order by Greg Anderson at 12:20. John Kraft served as moderator. There were five members of the Executive Committee present and an additional 16 faculty members.

The focus of the forum was to address the following questions:

- What are our governance goals?
- What is it that we value most when it comes to issues of faculty governance?
- How best can these goals be achieved and these values upheld?

It was deemed premature to address the issue of formation of a faculty senate before the following questions were addressed.

**Comments:**

It was stated that the report from the Task Force on Faculty Governance has opened a floodgate of commentary mirroring the remarks at the end of the report. Faculty members do not feel important. Apathy has grown over the last few years, and the atmosphere and tenor of faculty meetings have changed. It was questioned whether this might not be a part of the growth process, and whether the apathy might stem from a sense of loss of the way things were when the institution was smaller.

The data on the decrease in attendance at faculty meetings was question, as it was only shown for the last semester. Records prior to that time were not kept consistently, so only the data deemed collected in a reliable fashion was presented. However, the trend overall trend was one of decrease.

It was questioned whether the negative commentary and apathy might not be cyclical and product of the current budget situation and heavy work loads. It was suggested that the focus should be on long term goals rather than short term discontent.

It was expressed that in attending faculty meetings there is a sense of belonging, of being a part of the university as a whole, and that losing that feeling by going to a different governance system might not be desirable.

It was stated that there is a perception that a change in the structure will effect a change in participation by faculty. However, there is another perception that no matter what faculty does, it will be ignored. The latter should be remedied before changes are made in the system of governance. There is a sense of disconnection between faculty and

administration. The budget problems cannot entirely explain the sense of disconnection and lack of voice. There has been a loss of a sense of working toward a common goal that had been present in earlier years even when the budget was tight. There is a sense that perhaps faculty are focusing on students and ignoring faculty governance because they feel they can accomplish something with the students, where they cannot accomplish anything in the governance structure.

Concern was expressed over lack of attendance at the forum, and the lack of younger faculty present. There is a general sense that there are no rewards for participation in faculty governance, which may lead junior faculty to concentrate more on activities that will support tenure. It can also be very daunting for a junior faculty member to express their views prior to obtaining tenure, particularly when senior faculty do not express their views at faculty meetings. Departmental mentoring may help junior faculty overcome some of these issues.

The budget and the decision-making process surrounding the budget is an area of concern. Very few rationales are given for budgetary decisions. There is a feeling that faculty are not listened to when making budgetary requests, nor are they given information. There are no budget hearings anymore. Faculty do not know what the budget process is anymore. There used to be planning and sharing from the Deans on down, but this has not been in place for the last 4-5 years.

It was stated that it is up to the faculty to keep the administration honest. They need to ask questions and approach the administration with data and hard facts. (Aside: revenues from parking fees were supposed to be set aside for repaving of streets since the city will not pay for them, but no streets have been repaved to date).

It was stated that the faculty governance body should be autonomous, without an administrator at its head. It was pointed out that action in this area is limited due to constraints put in place by the Board of Regents, and that any changes in the faculty governance system had to be approved by the Board of Regents.

Concern was voiced that a faculty senate would just put another layer between the faculty and the administration, rather than facilitating communications. It was queried whether a smaller body, such as a senate, would be even more ignored than the full faculty. It was stated that the Executive Committee has the advantage of having institutional validation.

It was stated that a more representative form of governance would be desirable. This raised the question of how a senate would be more representative than the current system. It was stated that under the current system many departments are not represented, and that voting may be somewhat arbitrary with the majority of candidates being unknown.

It was suggested that faculty need to read the bylaws. Lack of participation may be a result of lack of knowledge.

Dissatisfaction was expressed about senior administrative officers not attending faculty meetings. If the President and the Vice President of Business and Finance do not attend faculty meetings, who will hear the concerns and issues brought forward there? There is a feeling that faculty is not being asked for input in the planning stages of things. Rather, they

are either asked for input after the fact, or simply being told that something is going to be a certain way or has been done. There is an illusion of democracy. At other institutions the Executive Committee or its equivalent can meet face to face with the President to express faculty concerns and ask for answers, rather than serving in a reporting-only function at administrative meetings.

Concern was expressed that everything important seems to be happening through the Foundation, and that everything is very outward-focused rather than concentrating on the concerns of existing faculty and programs.

The question was raised as to whether the faculty governance issue were being addressed with undue haste; perhaps the April timeline is too short.

A suggestion was made that there should be discussion at a faculty meeting along the lines of what was being discussed in the forums. Another suggestion was that department heads sit down with their faculty and discuss these issues to help faculty crystallize their ideas. It was also suggested that current attendees encourage their colleagues to attend future forums.

**Goals that were suggested:**

- Get back to a healthy working environment in terms of faculty governance.
- Enable faculty to feel they are actually participating and have a voice in the larger institution.
- Foster a feeling that work on standing committees is relevant and useful.
- Encourage and support junior faculty participation in the governance system.
- Promote more transparency in the budgetary process on campus.
- Promote a more collaborative relationship between faculty and the administration, allowing faculty a voice and avenues of input on matters such as the budget.
- Create a more representative form of faculty governance.
- Create more direct lines of communication between faculty and administration without fear of reprisal/retribution.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Panhorst  
Coordinator of Faculty Information

Faculty Forum  
presented by the Executive Committee of the AASU Faculty  
Faculty Governance

Minutes of Forum 1B  
Thursday, February 24, 2005  
Solms 108

The forum was called to order by Greg Anderson at 3:03 p.m. John Kraft served as moderator. There were three members of the Executive Committee present, an additional 26 faculty members, and Rebecca Carroll from Human Resources (invited by Dr. Nordquist).

The focus of the forum was to address the following questions:

- What are our governance goals?
- What is it that we value most when it comes to issues of faculty governance?
- How best can these goals be achieved and these values upheld?

It was deemed premature to address the issue of formation of a faculty senate before the above questions were addressed.

**Comments:**

It was stated that there was no need for a senate. Rather, there is a need for frank discussion with the administration about faculty concerns. A senate is perceived as one more layer between the administration and faculty. It was questioned whether the administration would be any more responsive to a senate than they are to the current system.

It was asked that a list of task forces be provided to the faculty. There is a sense that task forces are doing the work that the standing committees should be doing, and in some cases duplicating that work. There is concern because the President frequently goes outside the committee structure. It was stated that the President has said this is done because committees were not designed for speed and task forces are, and that task forces allow the involvement of staff and students. This was refuted by faculty who have served on task forces with long-term charges. It was suggested that in issues that involve staff and students as well as faculty that perhaps staff and student representatives could be asked to sit on committees in a non-voting capacity.

It was stated that the faculty feel they do not have a voice. There was dissatisfaction over decisions being made without faculty input and a sense that when faculty voice their opinions they are ignored. There was also concern that the recommendations of the standing committees are being ignored. It was stated that the President did not read the report from the Task Force on Faculty Governance and that this is an example of faculty voices being ignored.

It was stated that the faculty has become complacent and quiet. Some reasons posited were that there is a sense that speaking one's mind will bring retribution. Faculty need to feel safe to voice their concerns. It was queried where this feeling may be coming from – whether it is a cultural shift, or whether there have been incidents that have created the feeling. It was stated by a junior faculty member that junior faculty may feel there is reason to be concerned about voicing opinion because they observe that senior faculty are silent on important issues. It was also put forth that the meetings are too long, particularly because of University Curriculum Committee business, and that some may remain silent in order to get out of the meetings more quickly.

Dissatisfaction with the faculty meetings was voiced. There is a perception that they are used strictly to make announcements now, rather than as forums for debate as they were in the past. It was stated that in the past the administration brought issues to the faculty meetings for faculty input, and while the faculty voice was not always listened to, at least there was an opportunity for discussion and the satisfaction of being allowed to give input before decisions were made.

There is a sense of powerlessness and frustration among the faculty. This may be a result of budget cuts, long-term unfilled positions, and heavy teaching loads.

It was suggested that in the past the administration may have been giving more than they were required to, and that since the current administration gives only what is required there is a resulting feeling of loss. It was pointed out that there has been a lot of turnover in the administration in the last few years, and that the informal channels for communicating what was going on no longer exist. It was proposed that perhaps the faculty needs to demand more of the administration.

The issue of reward for service was raised. It is perceived that there is more reward for scholarship and research than there is for service.

It was stated that the current forum is an example of what a good faculty senate can be like: a cross-section of disciplines is represented and there is freedom to speak without the presence of senior administrators. It was also stated that good senates are extremely work-intensive.

It was stated that the University Curriculum Committee has untapped potential for power with respect to resource allocations. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction about curricular issues being brought to the full faculty and a feeling that this is a waste of the time allotted for the faculty meeting. It was suggested that the faculty need to take a close look at the bylaws and streamline the effectiveness of the existing system. Better use needs to be made of the faculty meeting.

The function of the Executive Committee was discussed. It was stated that the ultimate action of the Executive Committee is to make recommendations to the President. It was suggested that the Executive Committee should bring issues to the faculty by putting them on the agenda for the faculty meetings and having debate.

Concern was voiced over the increasing reliance on part-time faculty and the fact that they have no voice in faculty governance.

**Goals that were suggested:**

- Establish more effective means of communication between faculty and administration.
- Give the faculty a more effective voice in faculty governance.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Panhorst  
Coordinator of Faculty Information

Faculty Forum  
presented by the Executive Committee of the AASU Faculty  
Faculty Governance

Minutes of Forum 2A  
Monday, March 21, 2005  
UH 156

The forum was called to order by John Kraft at 1:25 p.m. There were four members of the Executive Committee present and an additional 8 faculty members.

The focus of the forum was to discuss how the goals identified at the first forums might be achieved:

- Establish direct lines of communication between faculty and administration.
- Create an environment where the work of standing committees is relevant and valued.
- Reestablish an environment where the faculty will openly discuss/debate issues.
- Encourage and support junior faculty participation in faculty governance.
- Establish a more collaborative relationship between faculty and the administration, particularly regarding issues such as resource allocation.

Faculty who have experience with other forms of faculty governance were invited to share those experiences.

**Comments:**

It was stated that perhaps the need of the faculty can be met through the current governance structure. Over the last 10-15 years, AASU has been forming a new institutional identity. With the Foundation, that identity is tending more toward a business model, and that is seen as disenfranchising the faculty.

There was a great deal of frustration expressed over the lack of two-way communication with the President. Proposals by faculty for the use of the storefront projects have been rejected, as well as proposals for money-making projects, and apparently no reasons have been given. In some cases these proposals never make it to the President or the Foundation. There was also frustration over faculty recommendations for administrative positions being ignored. Ownership of ideas often gets lost once it goes to the next administrative level. The faculty have no representation when it comes to things like space allocations. The faculty is not asked for their opinions on things, and is not listened to when they give their opinions. There is a perception that it doesn't matter what the faculty does – they will not be heard.

It was expressed that the "Dean of Faculty" aspect of the VPAA job has been lost. It was stated that the VPAA has said he does not represent the faculty.

Mixed messages are sent to new faculty regarding involving themselves in faculty governance. An instance was given from a new faculty orientation session of an administrator telling new faculty they should not involve themselves right after a senior faculty member encouraged them to become involved.

There was disagreement regarding curricular items being approved by the faculty as a whole. Some felt that the University Curriculum Committee should be the final point of action for curricular items, while others felt that removing curricular items from the faculty meeting agenda would make faculty feel more disenfranchised.

There is a belief by some that more people read the faculty meeting agenda when it was distributed on paper.

An issue that came up at previous forums was raised briefly: some faculty wish to know how parking fees have been spent, as they have seen no resurfacing of streets and no increase in campus security at night.

The question was raised of whether a faculty senate would be listened to any more or any better than the entire faculty. It was stated that a smaller group like a senate could lead to more meaningful discussions, such as what has been taking place in the forums.

There was mention of having a course release for members of the Executive Committee so they could perform better, but it was also suggested that this might prevent some from wishing to participate.

**Suggestions for improving the current structure:**

- Have the Executive Committee meet regularly with the President.
- Make better use of faculty meetings. Pro forma, ritual votes and announcements cause less engagement rather than more.
- New faculty orientation should be done by senior faculty members, not by administrators. New faculty should be groomed to participate in faculty governance. The orientation program needs to be restructured around teaching, scholarship and service, with the faculty taking the initiative.
- Require the President and all Vice Presidents to attend every faculty meeting in order to address questions as they occur, rather than have them attend by special invitation a month after something comes up.
- The faculty need to “bully” their way into being heard.
- The Executive Committee needs to toot its own horn and let the faculty know what it accomplishes in better fashion.
- When Deans make choices on establishing priorities and hiring new faculty, the faculty need to have a voice.
- There should be the ability to ask questions without fear.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Panhorst

Coordinator of Faculty Information

Faculty Forum  
presented by the Executive Committee of the AASU Faculty  
Faculty Governance

Minutes of Forum 2B  
Monday, March 24, 2005  
Solms 110

The forum was called to order by John Kraft at 3:00 p.m. There were four members of the Executive Committee present and an additional 9 faculty members.

The focus of the forum was to discuss how the goals identified at the first forums might be achieved:

- Establish direct lines of communication between faculty and administration.
- Create an environment where the work of standing committees is relevant and valued.
- Reestablish an environment where the faculty will openly discuss/debate issues.
- Encourage and support junior faculty participation in faculty governance.
- Establish a more collaborative relationship between faculty and the administration, particularly regarding issues such as resource allocation.

Faculty who have experience with other forms of faculty governance were invited to share those experiences.

**Comments:**

There is a feeling that committees are pushed aside by task forces. It was stated that it's the responsibility of the faculty to make committees effective. It is troubling to some that there are standing committees of the faculty and standing committees of the university that report directly to the President. There is a perception that task forces are secretive and that faculty are cut out, outflanked and outmaneuvered, and that faculty governance is just a figurehead. It was stated that once the Vice Chair of the Executive Committee was invited to attend the President's staff meeting, those sessions turned into "feel good" sessions and the President's "breakfast meetings" were started to circumvent faculty participation in the "real work."

The question was raised as to whether or not a faculty senate would make a difference since, according to the recollection of one faculty member present, the BOR requires that a faculty senate be headed by the President of an institution. As a peripheral issue, it was questioned whether it would be possible to have a faculty member chair the Executive Committee rather than an administrator.

There is frustration about issues of curriculum, staffing, and money priorities. The faculty do not know where the administration's priorities lie.

It was suggested that at the series of forums that have been held, what's been discussed has not actually been faculty governance, but issues of faculty influence and input.

**Suggestions:**

- Restructure committees to make them more appealing to administration. Ask the administration what motivates them to bypass committees in favor of task forces. If the President wants specific people to work on particular issues, perhaps they could be invited to sit on committees in regard to those specific issues.
- Have committees justify at the end of each year why they should continue the next year.
- Have faculty prepare questions for the administrators to address at the beginning of each academic year.
- Have administrators regularly attend committee meetings to address questions, rather than the suggestion at the other forum of attending faculty meetings. There was a thought that addressing smaller groups might be more effective.
- Request that decisions affecting the university go through some committee involving the faculty before they are approval.
- Make committees work to full strength and demand a voice.
- Have regular faculty forums to serve the Executive Committee and make sure the committee receives faculty input.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Panhorst  
Coordinator of Faculty Information