

## **Observations and Thoughts from the Executive Committee about our Standing Committee Structure to the Faculty Assembly of the University Senate—Beginning the Discussion, 2/10/2015**

In Senate President Michael Spring's January 8, 2015 Senate Matters column in the University Times, he noted in the last paragraph:

“...[I]t may be time to look again at how we share governance at the University. In the 1940s, Pitt was a small regional university. The Senate, in some ways, still reflects the structure of that University. By 1970, Pitt had established itself as an important comprehensive University with the potential for national stature. Today, Pitt is a recognized national leader and has begun to establish a significant global presence. Some of the standing committees of the Senate have transformed their roles and taken on new, more appropriate, roles, but others have not. For example, the University is more highly dependent on research funds and international activities, yet we have no committees focused on these areas. We are much larger and more complex and while administrative roles have proliferated, the Senate is not much larger than it was 60 years ago. The Senate needs to be sure it is structured and empowered to deal with the issues the University will face. I fear that if we do not, despite the dedication and hard work of our administrative colleagues we may not always make the wisest decisions as an institution. During another period of great change and challenge, the faculty must be committed to playing an active role in helping the administration to shape and direct the future of our great University.”

**A body like the University Senate functions and is managed best when the constituent units fully cover all of the important issues, but with the smallest number of such units and with as little overlap between these units as feasible.** The current Standing Committee structure has been in place with fairly few changes for over 5 decades, a time of enormous change in the University overall. As required by the Bylaws of the University Senate (Article VI, Section 2), the Executive Committee has been studying the Standing Committee structure for almost 3 years—especially so in the last year and a half. During that time the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Advocacy (formerly Anti-discriminatory Policies), Plant Utilization and Planning and Governmental Relations (formerly Commonwealth Relations) Committees have restructured to varying degrees. Others remain substantially unchanged. **As the result of our study, we now make the following five suggestions for further changes in our committee structure for careful further consideration by the entire University Senate.** If these suggestions are accepted and enacted, the total number of committees would be reduced to 14, from the current 15, and existing overlaps between committees would be reduced greatly or eliminated. Even at 14, the number of committees is large for the structure and workings of the Senate.

**1. Form a new Research Committee.** The University's role in research has grown enormously in the last few decades. We have found that the absence of a research committee greatly impedes Senate deliberations about research issues. While a newly formed Research Committee would have the prerogative and duty to prepare its own Mission Statement, we felt that it would be very helpful to develop a draft initial Mission Statement while this discussion was underway. With much input from faculty members who are both researchers and active in the Senate and Senior Administrators, we have developed the following draft:

### **Mission Statement of the Research Committee of the University Senate—DRAFT 5, 2/7/ 2015**

The Senate Research Committee focuses on research within the University of Pittsburgh, non-funded and funded, including relevant policies and procedures, research operations, research regulation and compliance, support of researchers, and the management of intellectual property, to assist the University Senate in its provision of advice and recommendations about these issues to the senior administration of the university and, also, to faculty, staff and students.

The Senate Research Committee communicates with researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and the various research offices of the University, including the Vice-Chancellor for Research Conduct and Compliance, the Vice-Provost for Research, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Biomedical Research, Health

Sciences, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical Research, Health Sciences, the Executive Director of the Health Policy Institute, and, as needed and appropriate, research offices at the School/College or Department levels. It communicates with the University Research Council (URC). The activities of the Research Committee of the University Senate are complementary to related activities of the URC, which provides advice directly to the Provost and the Vice-Provost for Research, and whose members (including the two members who are nominated by the University Senate) are appointed by the Provost.

The other major mission of the URC, to aid faculty members in identifying funding and liaisons and collaborations for research, would not be a part of the mission of the Senate Research Committee

**2. Merge the current Library Committee and University Press Committee** into what could perhaps be called the Library Information Access and University Press Committee. The University Press Committee was formed several decades ago, splitting it from the Library Committee. One of its major missions has been to review manuscripts proposed to the University Press for publication. For a number of years the University Press Committee has been only minimally active. We speculate that a major reason for this is that its mission of manuscript review may no longer be a viable one. It is difficult for us to envision an adequate role and scope for the University Press Committee as a free-standing committee, at least as currently structured and operating.

a. The mission of this combined committee would be to provide advice and recommendations to Senior Administration on policy, procedures and operations relating to Library Information Access and the University Press. These committees are currently considering this suggestion. This appears to us to be superior to the other option that we considered: “sun-setting” the University Press Committee.

b. Encourage the members of this newly formed Library Information Access and University Press Committee to provide greater and more active leadership and agenda-setting roles within the committee, as opposed to the more passive role adopted in the past, to increase its ability to provide better advice and recommendations to Senior Administration.

c. In order to reduce current potential overlaps, encourage this newly formed committee to refer primarily information technology issues related to information access to the Computer Usage Committee (see also below) and, also, to refer primarily physical plant utilization issues related to the Library to the Plant Utilization and Planning Committee.

**3. Merge the current Admissions and Student Aid and Student Affairs Committees** into one, perhaps called Student Admissions, Aid and Affairs. This merger would decrease potential overlaps and would provide a more appropriately sized role for a single committee. The committee chairs are in agreement and recommend approval. Encourage them to consider expanding their mission to include graduate as well as undergraduate students.

**4. Increase the mission of the Current Bylaws and Procedures Committee** to include more procedural issues of the University Senate, especially the Standing Committees, including a new role for it, in conjunction with each committee, in the preparation and annual maintenance of material for the Senate Handbook for each Committee’s activities and in the preparation and annual maintenance of an operations manual for each committee. The leaders of this committee are in agreement and recommend approval.

**5. Increase the role and mission of the current Computer Usage Committee to include many or most of the primarily information technology issues that are now facing other committees**, such as the Library Committee, Educational Policies Committee and the Plant Utilization and Planning Committee. Consider renaming it the Computer Usage and Information Technology Committee.

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