Faculty Senate Ways and Means Committee Notes

April 10, 2018

Update on discussion of term limits of department heads

Problems:

1. In small departments (some have as few as three faculty members), fixed term limits (e.g. after 5 years a new person must fill the role of department head) could create problems given that every faculty member would need to serve as a department head in a relatively short period of time. Some faculty has no interest in serving as a department head and some faculty are not qualified to serve as a department head.
2. Many departments are happy with their department head and do not want that person to be removed from that position.
3. It takes time to figure out how to function effectively as a department head. If the role of department head switches to a new person every few years, departments will rarely function as effectively as they should due to the steep learning curve.
4. The university does not offer nationally competitive salaries for department heads. If national searches are conducted, many are likely to fail repeatedly, further impeding effective functioning of the department.
5. Department heads at this university are 9-month employees, which also makes it difficult to recruit nationally.
6. There is currently a mechanism in place for faculty to remove a department head if they wish to do so.

Solutions:

1. Set a minimum term-of-appointment (e.g. 3 years) that must be renewed indefinitely if approved by the faculty.
2. Establish a set frequency for renewal (e.g. annual evaluation) for faculty to recommend continuation or removal of the department head.
3. Establish annual department head evaluations.
4. In order to protect faculty, evaluations of department heads should be anonymous. This could be done electronically (e.g Survey Monkey) or via paper and pencil hardcopy.

Committee Charge:

1. Review the faculty handbook and minutes from past Faculty Senate meetings to see if:
   A.) Elections are a part of the selecting department heads process or if a proposal was made in the senate for elections of department heads.
   B.) Evaluations of department heads are mentioned or if a proposal was made in the senate for elections of department heads.

Outcome:

    A.) The committee reviewed Article XIX (Selecting Department Heads) as well as the remainder of the handbook. Part II of Article XIX requires a meeting between the Dean of the college and the department in which roles and qualifications of candidates as well as goals of the department and the scope of the search are discussed. Part IV of Article XIX describes the description of the search. All submitted materials from candidates are available for review by department faculty. Item 3 of Part IV states that the committee, in consultation with the Dean, decides on procedures and a schedule. **Specifically, voting processes are defined in advance.** Therefore, elections can be part of the process in selecting department heads. If faculty want voting to be a part of this process, they need to make it known during the initial meeting between the Dean and the Department faculty. Official language for elections of department heads does not need to be proposed.

    B.) The committee reviewed Article XXXVI. Academic Leadership, Qualified Faculty and Personnel item 6 states that department heads will conduct annual performance evaluations of faculty and personnel, but does not mention evaluation of the department head. Senate meeting minutes did not have any formal proposals made regarding evaluations of department heads, although the issue was discussed in several meetings. Official language for evaluations of department heads should be proposed.

Outstanding Questions:

1. Do we want to set term limits for department heads? If so, what is the rationale?
2. Do we want to set a minimum term? If so, how long?
3. Do we want to establish a frequency for renewal? If so, how often?
4. Do we want to simply propose that department head evaluations will be conducted anonymously by department faculty every ___ years and leave the individual questions and the implementation mechanisms up to the individual departments? Or do we want to attempt to create a universal form/questionnaire for all departments?