

Recommendations from the University Faculty Organization Committee to Improve Faculty Governance

In the 2017-18 academic year, the UFOC conducted and reviewed the results of a survey of committee chairs across the university. Many of the suggestions from this survey led to UFOC discussions about changes to faculty handbook language. The following recommendations to streamline the governance process are drawn from this survey, as well as from our experience during this academic year with committee formation.

1. Currently, many task forces, working groups, and search committees operate outside of our faculty governance system when administrators invite faculty to join these groups. If these groups could be codified within the Faculty Handbook, that formalization would allow UFOC to make faculty appointments to these groups to spread out the workload. It would also allow other interested faculty, who would not otherwise have the opportunity, to join these groups.
2. Due to the increasing difficulty in finding times for committees to meet, committees should consider whether some of the work can be done electronically and asynchronously. Votes on approving minutes and other actions could be handled by email. Scheduling applications like Doodle Polls could help committees schedule face-to-face meetings. Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, or Google Hangouts could allow for virtual meetings.
3. An updated and working database of faculty committee assignments (including working groups, task forces, and search committees) would allow UFOC to have a clearer picture of workload when making committee appointments.
4. Some faculty members representing minority groups are placed on numerous search committees to improve the committees' diversity. If appointing faculty members to faculty search committees and appointing faculty representatives to administrative search committees were under UFOC's purview, UFOC could prevent a few minority faculty from being overextended on multiple search committees.
5. The UFC, UFOC, and representative faculty and/or chairs of all three colleges should consider which University Committees require explicit representation from all three Colleges (CAS, COB, & COE).

In our current system, College of Business and College of Education faculty serve on numerous committees and are unfairly overburdened. On the other hand, not every faculty member in the College of Arts & Sciences who seeks a committee appointment can get one; in general, University Committees have too few open spots for CAS faculty.

At the same time, Promotion & Tenure committees and department chairs may exert pressure on junior faculty to have certain kinds of service. This pressure may need to be reconsidered given our current governance and administration landscape. More at-large positions, which are voted on by all faculty, may serve to both spread service opportunities and unify the faculty. We would like to see this point discussed in a larger body—if not at the meeting on Thursday, 5/9/19, then at a future UFC meeting.

6. Faculty Committees at all levels (University, College, Department) could benefit from a Co-Chair structure, rather than a single Chair, to spread out the responsibilities and prevent from overburdening one faculty member.

7. Faculty, particularly junior faculty, should be encouraged to run for elected committees. UFOC typically sees many faculty volunteer for appointed committees, but UFOC rarely finds enough volunteers for elected committees.

8. Faculty seeking committee service should nominate themselves for at least 3 committees to allow UFOC enough flexibility in making committee appointments. Junior faculty may want to nominate themselves for even more committees to increase their opportunity for a committee appointment.

9. The Student Affairs & Campus Life Advisory Committee's duties overlap with the duties of the Wellness Task Force, UMW CARES, and the Community Engagement Office. The Student Affairs & Campus Life Advisory Committee could be dissolved.

10. Once the new General Education system is up and running, the First-Year Seminar Committee could be incorporated into the General Education Committee.

11. Not every committee is needed. The Intercollegiate Athletics Advisory Committee is no longer needed since the Faculty Athletics Representative now performs the duties of the former committee.

Regarding the University Faculty Council:

Providing faculty with a brief summary of actions taken at the UFC meetings within a few days of the meeting helps faculty be informed and remain engaged in the faculty governance process.

In the College of Arts & Sciences:

The CAS Promotion & Tenure Committee should decrease its number of members from 9 to 7, with 6 CAS members and 1 external member. At least one member should be from each of the divisions: Arts & Humanities; Social Sciences; Health, PE & STEM.