

Ad Hoc Committee to Assess Faculty Participation and Empowerment

Executive Summary of Final Report to Faculty Senate¹

June 8, 2009

Committee Members: Joe Ediger, Michael Flower (Chair), Maude Hines, John Rueter, Linda Walton and Craig Wollner; **Survey Research:** Bob Liebman

The Ad hoc Committee to Assess Faculty Participation and Empowerment was created by the Faculty Senate pursuant to a motion passed on February 5, 2008.

We move to create an ad hoc committee to assess faculty participation and empowerment at PSU, and to come forward with proposals for reform of the system of shared governance. The committee will field a survey, hold focused conversations with faculty, staff, and administrators, and research shared governance at other institutions, with attention to how institutions have accommodated growth similar to ours.

On recommendation by the Senate Steering Committee, the committee will consist of representatives from the Committee on Committees, the Educational Policy Committee, the Advisory Council, Senate Steering Committee, and other faculty and administrators knowledgeable about university governance. The survey and conversations will be designed to determine faculty and staff satisfaction with participation and shared governance at PSU; what obstacles, if any, are currently in the way of faculty and staff involvement in governance; and ideas for increasing participation in governance.

Chronology of the Committee's Work

- **Reviewed the recommendations of the earlier Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Governance** (submitted May 9, 2005, but not adopted), available at http://homepage.mac.com/flowermj/epc/archive/minutes_assets/FacGovReport.pdf
- **Reviewed a survey of existing literature on shared governance provided by the Educational Policy Committee.**
- **Invited Bob Liebman to design a survey and hold focus groups to assess the faculty's view of participation and governance.** Faculty and administrators in the focus groups had served in the Senate and on University committees. To supplement his research, Liebman also carried out informal interviews with administrators as well as discontented faculty who would not take part in focus groups.
- **Conducted a governance survey distributed to all faculty, staff, and administrators eligible for election to the Senate.** In fall 2008, Liebman and the Committee used the information gathered in these conversations, as well as the literature review, to construct a web survey of faculty, staff, and administrators eligible for election to the Senate. Of 1132 eligibles, 587 (52%) completed the survey; Liebman presented an analysis of the results at both of our open campus forums in April.
- **Held two open campus forums in April.** The first, "Who are the Faculty?" comprised members from across ranks of instructional faculty. The second, "What is Shared Governance?" looked at the history and experience of shared governance at PSU
- **Hosted a visit by Adrianna Kezar** of the University of Southern California, one of the most thoughtful and prolific advocates for reflection on and reform of US universities. Professor Kezar, who has ties to PSU from the 1990s when she was part of a Kellogg Foundation study team on the urban university, read the research findings, consulted with the Committee, discussed changes in the character of faculty and governance at PSU in

¹See the committee website—<http://homepage.mac.com/flowermj/governance/index.html>—for additional comment and supporting materials.

the context of national shifts in higher education, and presented options for strengthening our governance process.

Summary recommendations: Based on our findings, the Committee recommends the following:

- 1) A number of the recommendations that follow require changes in the Faculty Senate constitution. Hence, **we recommend** the formation of an Ad Hoc Constitutional Amendment Committee to undertake a review of the more than 40-year-old PSU Faculty Constitution and make recommendations for revision that will bring faculty governance into alignment with the institution as it is now. One of the most important issues to be addressed is the transformation in the faculty and issues related to representation of contingent faculty. Because this recommendation was also made by the 2005 committee and no action was taken on it, we present a motion to form such a committee at the end of this document.
- 2) Among the possible conceptions of the Faculty Senate's purpose and collective vision—including community building, blocking the actions taken by others, sorting out political interests, or strategic engagement with institutional issues—**we recommend** that, in addition to its normal responsibilities of curricular oversight, the PSU Faculty Senate adopt a more activist conception of itself as a faculty governance body that operates in a consciously strategic fashion to address institution-wide issues in order to be a working partner with the administration and all statewide partners in shared governance. **We recommend** a significant portion of the first fall term Senate meeting be set aside to shape a strategic agenda for the year. As a further extension of this strategic focus, **we recommend** formation of a Provost's Advisory Committee.
- 3) The Senate is too large to act as an effective agent of faculty governance. **We recommend** halving its size by changing the ratio from 1 senator per 10 members within the present categories to 1 senator per 20.
 - 3a) **We recommend** the election process be electronic.
 - 3b) Given a smaller Senate and recognizing the size of the university, **we recommend** the possible creation of 'unit councils' as intermediary representative structures.
 - 3c) Because of its size, **we recommend** considering the replacement of at-large representation of the CLAS faculty with smaller blocs that might form a caucus (humanities, social sciences, sciences, for example)
- 4) The faculty survey revealed considerable discontent about the operation of the Senate. In addition to a smaller Senate and associated changes (3, above), **we recommend** the following as facilitating more effective Senate operation and thus more effective governance.
 - 4a) Encourage and mentor new faculty to get involved in faculty governance, in part by developing a brief handbook that would introduce them to how things work. If the Faculty Senate becomes a more efficient and effective body, then new faculty will be far more likely to be willing to participate..
 - 4b) Provide at least one course release for the Presiding Officer (as with Secretary to the Faculty).
 - 4c) Provide and fund ongoing support of the Faculty Senate website so that all faculty can easily follow the business of the Senate.
 - 4d) Make it common practice for at least one member of the Steering Committee to have served the year before; when at all possible the Presiding Officer Pro Tempore should become the next Presiding Officer.
 - 4e) Include in the June Senate a summary of the important business discussed that year and a brief summary of how the Faculty Constitution scripts the Senate's business. This will help acclimate new senators.
 - 4f) Endeavor to bring in new faculty to create a broader spectrum of representation on committees.

Motion

Whereas, PSU has grown significantly since the last revision of its Constitution, and
Whereas, the 2005 Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Governance, and the 2008-09 Ad Hoc Committee to Assess
Faculty Participation and Empowerment both recommended the formation of a Constitutional Amendment
Committee,

We move that an ad hoc committee be formed to propose changes to the constitution that bring it more in line
with our current composition and circumstances. .