

WOU Committee on Committees Report

April 23, 2019

Overview

In the 2018/2019 academic year, the Committee on Committees convened per Faculty Senate bylaws to “review the current scope of Faculty Senate committees, workload, charges, and related matters.”

Specifically, the committee was charged to consider:

- Committee charges
- Role of ARC
- Committee membership practices
- Committee meeting days and times
- Service workload discrepancies
- Any other matters related to Faculty Senate committees

Our recommendations are below, and include changes to the way Faculty Senate’s Executive Committee is structured; how Faculty Senate committee members are selected; and suggestions for how new senators and committee members can be more effectively introduced to the work of Faculty Senate and its committees.

List of Current Committees

Current committees, along with their charges and makeup, can be found on the Faculty Senate “committees” page: <http://www.wou.edu/facultysenate/committees/>

Problems with Current Structure and Practices

Representation Requirements

Currently, many committees require representation from all divisions. Although this is intended to ensure that no division is left out of discussion and decisions which may affect them, it can place a burden on smaller divisions, which have limited numbers of faculty.

Inconsistent Practices

Faculty Senate committees do not always follow the same practices. Although this can be of necessity, in many cases committee practices and expectations are not made explicit anywhere either.

This circumstance can be confusing to new committee members, who may struggle to contribute. The lack of consistency—or at least the lack of documentation—can lead to power imbalances among those with long records of service on committees and those who are new but eager to serve as well as obscuring the committee’s work from the rest of the campus community.

Recruitment

Recruitment for committee service relies entirely on volunteerism within academic divisions.

This can lead to trouble for people who don’t like to say “no” to things, as shown by [Faculty Senate Executive Committee’s presentation on April 28, 2018](#), which showed that some faculty members were on as many as seven committees, while others were not on any of the committees surveyed. (This does not mean those faculty weren’t doing some other kind of service.)

These results show that a reliance on volunteerism can lead to over-extending and burnout of some faculty members. This tendency of over-reliance on a small group of faculty members was specifically called out by the reviewers who visited as part of our NWCCU mid-cycle review.

It is worth noting that, per article 8, section 2, item C of [the Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), that all faculty are expected to be involved in Institutional Service, defined as “collegiality, service, and leadership within the department, college, and/or institution”. The committee recognizes that “Institutional Service” includes service beyond Faculty Senate committees, but would argue that a reliance on volunteers for committee work spreads that particular type of service unevenly and unfairly.

Recommendations

Executive Committee

- Change the makeup and membership of Executive Committee to focus on diversity across colleges.
 - President (must be tenured)
 - VP
 - Secretary
 - Past-president (non-voting)
 - IFS (non-voting)
 - IFS (non-voting) (optional)
 - At Large, not restricted by college

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- In the above model, the four at-large members should be unrestricted by college. (If more than 4 volunteers, then ranked voting at senate decides) — the goal is to have diverse representation in a broadly constructed sense, spanning not only academic colleges but also gender, promotional rank, and other areas of concern.
- The Vice President and ideally one other executive committee member take on the role of “committee liaisons,” assisting with updating committee membership listings, assigning people to their choice of committee, and collecting data on committee service.
- Additionally, a member of Executive Committee attend the first meeting of each Faculty Senate committee meeting to discuss expectations of the committee for that year.

ARC

- ARC formally dissolve.
- Thereafter, Executive Committee create ad hoc committees as needed to resolve any issues related to academic requirements.

Committee On Committees

The Committee on Committees continue its work on an ad hoc basis, considering issues such as the establishment of generic committee norms and the minimum level of service expected of faculty members serving on committees.

Further topics could potentially include:

- How to contribute to committees
- Taking of attendance
- Recording of action items and minutes
- Alternate meeting dates
- Committee bylaws
- Composition of committees
- Establishing Terms of service
- Reviewing committee charges
- Term limits on consecutive service

- Collegiality and respectfulness
- Role and duties of Curriculum System Manager
- Timing of Elections for Executive Committee At-Large members

All Committees

To ensure that faculty have the same expectations and understanding of what is required from committee service, and foster a more healthy workplace environment, Faculty Senate explore ways to help mentor new faculty members serving on committees.

- Each committee create a document (“executive summary”) at the end of spring term which summarizes its key accomplishments for the previous year and outstanding issues, and sends it to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee makes this document available to new committee members at the start of the next fiscal year (e.g. on the faculty senate website; by e-mail; etc).

Faculty Senate Committees Page

Faculty Senate Executive should explore ways to make the “committees” page more effective.

Timeline

- **May 14, 2019 Faculty Senate meeting** - Vote on bylaws changes
- **May 23, 2019 Faculty Senate meeting** - Election for at-large senators
- **By Fall Term 2019**, additional at-large senators voted in if needed
- **By Winter Term 2020**, Executive Committee implement committee liaison
- **By end of Spring Term 2020**, Committees submit first executive summary

Action Items (i.e. what you’re voting on)

- Officially dissolve ARC and replace it with ad-hoc committees as needed
- Faculty Senate Executive Committee revise “committees” page
- Faculty Senate Bylaws Changes:
 - Change Article III, Section 1.2 to “**Four at-large senators**”
 - Under Article III, Section 1, add “**1.7 The Faculty Senate President must hold tenure.**”
 - Under Article III, Section 3.3, add “**3.3.10 As “committee liaison,” assist with updating committee membership listings, assigning people to their choice of committee, and collecting data on committee service, ideally with one other member of Faculty Senate Executive Committee.**”

- Under Article VII, add **"Section 6. Before the end of every spring term, each Faculty Senate committee shall create a document ("executive summary") which summarizes its key accomplishments for the academic year and any outstanding issues, and sends it to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall makes this document available to new committee members by the start of the next academic year."**
- Under Article VII, add **"Section 7. A member of Executive Committee shall attend the first meeting of each committee to discuss expectations of the committee for that year."**
- Committee on Committees continue working, especially on committee composition ideas