

REVISED REPORT ON THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM AND FACULTY MEETINGS

14 March 1988

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In December 1986 the faculty resolved to establish a Task Force on Faculty Governance and charged it with the specific responsibility of examining our committee system and faculty meetings and, if deemed appropriate, proposing changes in one area or the other or in both. This report presents the outcome of that charge: recommendations for restructuring the committee system and for clarifying procedures and conditions bearing on the conduct of our meetings.

A word or two about the overall organization and eccentricities of the report would seem in order. The Preamble briefly recounts the way the Task Force pursued its business and what the faculty might reasonably expect to gain by legislating its recommendations. Those pertaining to faculty meetings appear in Part I, those pertaining to the committee system in Part II. We intend to move each as a unitary package, and separately. Yet, the bulk of the report focuses on the committee system, our examination of it having sparked recommendations for change as extensive as they are complicated. The report resists casual reading, that is also to say. Persons new to the faculty will find especially disconcerting our acronymic references to committees they have scarcely

PREAMBLE

Our recommendations reflect in great measure information gleaned from numerous sources, beginning with the written observations and strong opinions of the faculty at large, whose counsel the Task Force solicited early last spring, and with annual reports solicited about the same time from committees that produce and file them. Subsequently we conducted interviews with all of our standing committees as composed in 1986-87, usually meeting with them in their full complement but on occasion with only one or two of their representatives. Detailed accounts of those interviews we duly recorded in writing. We also interviewed CGA officers and the following administrators: President Porter and the late President Palamountain, the Provost, the Dean and Associate Dean of the Faculty, the Vice-President of Business Affairs, the Secretary of the College, the Dean and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, the Registrar, the Directors of Admissions and Financial Aid, and the Director and Assistant Director of the University Without Walls. All the materials mentioned above--responses from the faculty at large, annual reports, the content of our interviews--became the springboard to our deliberations. From the day we began collecting information to the day we distributed this report the Task Force has met 37 times, apart from sessions devoted to interviews.

Part I--the section devoted to the faculty meeting--reflects the character of the questions posited in our charge, which are in the main quite specific, discrete, and blessedly few: they call for no lengthy disquisition. Yet we received only a handful of replies from colleagues who took up the questions in earnest, and only a few of these expressed firm preferences, not all of them the same. Our assessment of faculty opinion yielded no clear consensus, in other words, and our debates yielded no compelling reasons for recommending radical departures from the way we conduct our meetings now--thus the brevity of Part I, which sets forth only a few proposals for modest reforms.

In accordance with our charge, we also considered the relationship of college committees to the administration and to each other, as well as the relationship of CAPTS, CAFR, CEPP, and Financial Planning to the Board of Trustees. We have incorporated our conclusions about committee and administrative relationships in Part II. We have little to report on 'the relationship of key faculty committees to the Board other than to remark that the Board altered the relationship when it reorganized its own committee structure several years ago. The old structure paralleled the faculty committee system in areas of common concern, making communication with the Board relatively simple and direct. The new trustee committees do not correspond to CAPTS, CAFR, CEPP, and Financial Planning. Although the faculty has no prerogatives in this matter, we would urge the President to discuss it with the Board.

From the very start, grappling with the committee system proved to be much more complex. We felt justified in interpreting our charge as a mandate for radical thinking. Thus we entertained for a time the merits of installing a system structured on hierarchical or pyramidal lines peaking with a Faculty Senate, but decided finally that such a configuration is more enticing for its symmetry than it is conducive to realizing Skidmore's immediate and foreseeable needs; and that upon second thought, moreover, this faculty, long accustomed to speaking out as individuals, would hardly be disposed to surrendering its will to a single executive body empowered to make autonomous decisions binding on everyone. We then tu

and faculty groups from splintering financial and academic policies, problems, and decisions. To these ends, the recommendations seek to deflate the numerical membership of certain committees, abolish more than a few of them, create a minimal number of new ones, classify as elected or appointed several others, and consolidate or redistribute the functions of several more. We had occasion even to assign new, more apt names to three committees. Part II specifies which committees our recommendations affect. The chart appearing immediately below compresses the overall results, that is, conveys what the system in toto would amount to on paper, though it is not meant to suggest that the results necessarily conduce to a neat schema with leak-proof categories (a hopeless goal the Task Force chased in vain). It should be added that the chart makes no mention of Faculty observers nor reflects the faculty's participation on CGA committees. (Return to the Beginning)

COMMITTEES OF THE FACULTY

Educational Affairs

CEPP

CURRICULUM

LIBERAL STUDIES (to be di

COLLEGE BENEFITS

FINANCIAL POLICY AND PLANNING (now Financial Planning)

The chart should arrest the attention of colleagues who have watched with dismay the proliferation of committees over the years: more compact, greatly more manageable, the system envisioned by the Task Force would decrease the number of committees from 36 to 19. One should also be wary of course of quantifying savings in time and energy. Considered by itself, the chart can be deceiving inasmuch as our recommendations would actually expand the current functions of several committees (those of the Curriculum Committee especially) even as it would abolish others, a few of which perform only modest chores and gather together only rarely. However, in the absence of a more accurate measure of efficiency, comparative figures will have to suffice, and they augur appreciable gains in any case, notwithstanding their crude reliability. Perhaps an even more impressive gauge of what our recommendations promise is the number of committee seats, or slots, that must be filled to put the system in gear and keep it humming--now somewhere between 164 and 168 by our count, including 2 Faculty Observers, 6 slots on CGA committees, and the equivalent of 7 more taken up in cross-representation between committees. The new system would require approximately 83 slots--a reduction of roughly 50 percent.

Faculty influence and effective governance being of a piece, the potential hazard in cutting down the number of committees did not escape the Task Force. It seems to us fair to say that, conjuring with both mechanical and inventive means to our end, we have extended and reinforced faculty influence where it counts most. The most obvious examples are the two new major committees we seek to incorporate into the system, the Institutional Planning and the Co-Curricular Policy Committees. Equally important, reflective of a recurring worry among faculty members and administrators alike, our recommendations mandate the presence of more tenured faculty on key committees while allowing space for the integration of the junior faculty. The worry derives from the recent history of elections and committee membership in consequence of which junior faculty members have sometimes had to endure the pressures of premature leadership and the unenviable posture of representing the whole faculty in matters of great academic magnitude.

It is that observation that moves the Task Force, finally, to remark the obvious: the success or failure of faculty governance depends on the spirit underlying and fueling it, a sense of citizenship, the judicious concern of each faculty member for the proper operation of the system as manifested in serving on committees and voting for one's colleagues in the awareness of the specific role of each committee. That service must be weighed thoughtfully, to be sure, in light of one's own career and productivity and continuing growth as a teacher. Still, the point deserves to be stressed: as committee service becomes merely symbolic in the absence of an effective system, faculty members mere laborers in the vineyards rather than true participants in the common purposes of higher education, so the system works best only as persons from every program, every rank, and every stage of longevity bring their diverse perspectives to bear upon the cooperative decisions that shape the activities of the College. Some committees call upon considerable experience, the institutional memory of Skidmore's veterans; others profit from fresh experiences; most need a balance between relative veterans and relative novices.
(Return to the Beginning)

PART I: THE FACULTY MEETING

The faculty has asked the Task Force to examine the faculty meeting with regard to five issues:

1. who shall preside;
2. who shall attend the meeting;
3. who shall vote;

4. when non-voting faculty shall have the privileges of the floor;
5. all procedures and rules used in "legislating."

As part of our examination we carefully read the letters from those few colleagues who addressed themselves to the faculty meeting, explored the faculty governance system of more than a dozen other colleges, and raised the issues listed above in our interviews with administrators. After considerable discussion of our mandate, the Task Force wishes to recommend a few modest reforms.

We believe that the President should continue to preside over the faculty meetings. The most obvious reasons relate to the President's stature and role as the executive head of the College. No one else's leadership could have as strong an impact on the tone of our meeting, or on the collegiality of the institution. To put it another way, exposure to the President nourishes an (s)-1(a)(e)4(c)4(d t)-2(h10()-2(on. T)1((i)-2(t)- (d t)-2(h1(d t)-2(h)3((w)2[

1982-83 Faculty Handbook as having faculty status, including the vote, are the same ten cited in the 1986, or ninth, edition: there have been no additions to this list. The only persons who may vote at faculty meetings are full-time members of the teaching faculty, the librarians, and the ten administrators specified in the Faculty

3. The omnibus ballot should be circulated after all elections have been completed, and the election schedule should allow ample time for its circulation before the end of the year.
4. Special elections should be held for replacements on major committees, such as CAPTS, CAFR, CEPP, and Financial Planning, and efforts made to ensure, when possible, that replacements will have had previous experience on those committees.
5. A junior faculty member who receives tenure while sitting on a committee requiring the presence of one or more tenured faculty shall be counted as one of its tenured members in the next election.
6. All committees should have operating codes and, together with the latest annual report, make them available to new committee members at the beginning of the academic year; and except for committees receiving confidential materials, all should maintain easily accessible files of minutes, which new members are encouraged to read.
7. All committees have the discretion to appoint to their own subcommittees members of the faculty at large, students, or administrators, but all are encouraged to consult the Committee on Faculty Governance beforehand, and all, in any case, must apprise CFG of such appointments.
8. A half-time faculty secretary shall be employed to alleviate the burden of clerical work on all committees but especially that of CAPTS and the Committee on Faculty Governance, and shall be housed in the Dean of the Faculty's office.
9. Contingent upon departmental needs, persons chairing CAPTS, the Curriculum Committee, and CEPP shall have reduced teaching loads. (Return to the Beginning)

B. Proposals for Forming Two New Major Committees

1. The Co-Curricular Policy Committee, chaired by the President, shall be concerned with the cultural and intellectual atmosphere on campus, with co-curricular and recreational activities, and with broader issues having campus-wide, national, and international import. It shall function as a forum for exploring and elevating the quality of life at Skidmore and will set policy for the co-curriculum and for the shaping and scheduling of extracurricular events.

Membership: The President, the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dean of the Faculty, the CGA President, the CGA Vice-President for Co-Curricular Affairs, the Director of Minority and International Students, and three elected faculty members for staggered three-year terms (two tenured, one untenured). If necessary, or if deemed appropriate, the committee shall convene other administrative officers. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, the Director of College Events, and the Director of Community Education and Summer Conferences shall serve as the staff of this committee.

Rationale: Just as we have a committee devoted to educational planning and policy, so it behooves the faculty to support a committee devoted to co-curricular planning and policy in recognition of the importance of co-curricular experiences in students' lives and the classroom benefits to be derived from nourishing a rich cultural and intellectual community. In addition to its serving some of the functions Community Council covered in its heyday, we would expect C-CPC to bring to the entire community's attention ethical, social, and political issues that periodically need to be addressed and that indeed periodically threaten to fracture the community--to serve as both catalyst and forum, as both goad and haven. More pressing still, we need to focus the diverse and bountiful activities of the college and the energies of persons and departments responsible for them--athletic events, exhibits, lectures, conferences, concerts, films, and theatrical productions that fill the Skidmore calendar to overflowing. As the calendar takes shape now, many members of the community are torn between conflicting possibilities, between equally attractive events scheduled at the same hour, many of which go unattended in

consequence, even premier events, much to the embarrassment of guest lecturers or performers and their sponsors. In brief, as the hub of informed scheduling and collaborative programming, C-CPC would serve all of us in good stead. The Task Force believes that having the President chair this committee is one of the keys to its success--an appropriate way of acknowledging the President's critical role in generating a lively cultural and intellectual atmosphere and of demonstrating a commitment to Integrating the curricular and co-curricular life of the College. As broader, more sensitive issues arise and must be confronted, such as investment in South Africa, the President can be a potent moral force in this important area, but needs to be in a position to exert leadership, and this of course the President can do if ensconced as Chair of C-CPC.

2. The Institutional Planning Committee, chaired by the President, shall engage in strategic, tactical, and environmental planning for educational, financial, and co-curricular affairs.

Membership: The President, the Provost, the Vice-President for Business Affairs, Chairs of CEPP, Financial Policy Committee, and a faculty representative from C-CPC, two additional faculty members (to be elected), one of whom is tenured, the other not, two students chosen by CGA, the President of CGA, and the Director of institutional Research as the staff of this committee. Since it would be helpful to keep intact the institutional memory of the committee among faculty members, the two elected ones will serve staggered four-year terms.

Rationale: We now have a committee dedicated solely to educational planning, and another dedicated solely to financial planning; we have a task force on long-

self-determined majors through a regimen of studies. CC shall make certain that one of its elected members will chair this subcommittee, and that it will consist of other appointed members whose disciplines differ. Ideally, their disciplines should also be wide-ranging. (Return to the Beginning)

D. Changes in Committee Functions or Compositions

1. Affirmative Action Committee

Proposal: Membership

The following description of membership shall replace the current description.

Two members of the faculty, two students, two administrators, and two members of the support staff, to be appointed by the President for two-year terms. Normally a committee member may serve only two successive terms.

Rationale:

This change is intended to balance representation among segments of the College and to streamline the committee for easier functioning.

2. Athletic Council

Proposal: Function

The phrase "to the Co-Curricular Policy Committee" shall be substituted for "to the Athletic Director and, through the Athletic Director to the President ,..." in the description of Athletic Council's functions.

Rationale:

The new Co-Curricular Policy Committee is to be charged with policy oversight of all co-curricular activities.

3. Animal Care Committee

Membership:

This committee is mandated by New York State. Since it has little business and applies to only two departments,

curricular matters; to administer the self-determined majors program; to make recommendations to the faculty concerning other curriculum matters brought before it by the faculty, students, and the administration.

Membership

The following membership description shall replace the current description: Six faculty members, each from a different department, at least two of whom are tenured, elected to serve three-year terms; the Associate Dean of the Faculty; and two students selected by CGA. Non-voting members of the committee are the Registrar and the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. An elected member of the committee shall chair a self-determined majors subcommittee, composed of other members appointed by the Curriculum Committee to represent a reasonable range of academic disciplines.

Rationale:

The description of functions has been restored to the general charge stated in the 1982-83 Faculty Handbook, which lost a crucial phrase in the transition to the ninth edition, whose language would restrict the committee to reviewing only those curricular matters concerned with all-college requirements. The new language restores the committee's power to act for the faculty in reviewing other curricular matters, such as new courses, major and minor requirements, etc. In addition, the self-determined majors program has been brought under the authority of the committee.

The presence of more experienced faculty on this committee has been a felt need for a number of years; hence the requirement of at least two tenured members. Cross-representation on other committees now required is seen by many members as an unnecessary additional burden for one of our busiest faculty committees, particularly as information from other committees can be readily had by exchanging minutes and the chairs of the Curriculum Committee and CEPP may confer on matters of mutual interest as they see fit.

9. Faculty Development Committee

Proposal:

That the name of the Research Grants and Lectures Committee be changed to the Faculty Development

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nul(d)-4wy neluy taculty Res(c)4ch Lecturerl-2(y)20()-10au6ub e]Msmr l-2(y)20()-10au

creative work, faculty exchanges, opportunities for enhancing one's teaching effectiveness. The Research Grants and Lectures Committee, under a new name, seems the obvious group to promote and oversee the institution of such programs.

10. Financial Policy and Planning Committee

Proposal:

That the name of the Financial Planning Committee be changed to the Financial Policy and Planning Committee.

Membership

The following description of membership shall replace the current description: Four faculty members, at least two of whom are tenured, elected to serve four-year terms; two students selected by CGA; the Provost; and the Vice President for Business Affairs.

Rationale:

The proposed name reflects the felt need of the faculty to be involved in ongoing policy decisions on financial matters in addition to planning. The planning stage of our collective enterprise will preoccupy faculty on the new institutional Planning Committee. The purpose in changing the composition of the committee is to strengthen the voice of the faculty on this important committee.

11. Institutional Review Board

Membership:

This committee also is mandated by New York State. Like ACC, it has narrow functions that do not affect the college as a whole. The Dean of the Faculty shall chair and assemble the committee in accordance with state requirements.

12. Liberal Studies Committee

Proposal:

That the Liberal Studies Committee be dissolved two years after the implementation of the new governance system. The Curriculum Committee then will assume the responsibility for reviewing new course proposals and other reforms in Liberal Studies as it does now for the rest of the curriculum.

Membership

The following description of membership shall replace the current description for the remaining two years:

Three faculty members, each representing a different category in the Liberal Studies (sequenced I, II, III, IV), appointed annually by the faculty who will teach in that category in the next academic year or who have

