

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

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INTRODUCTION

SHORT HISTORY OF GOVERNANCE AT SKIDMORE COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

The faculty Committee on Appointments, Promotions, Tenure, and Sabbaticals [CAPTS], recommended the formation of The Task Force on Faculty Governance in November of 1986. This action resulted from a growing dissatisfaction on the part of many faculty with the inordinate demands made by the 36 committees

then in existence on which faculty served. Service on such committees consumed time and energy and diverted faculty attention from teaching and professional growth, which are other important ways that the faculty serves the College and the students. Many with experience in faculty governance were also dismayed by the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the proliferating committee structure.

untenued rather than senior faculty in committee elections. As a result, junior faculty filled the ranks of important committees, such as the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning. In 1984 at the time of the decision to terminate the nursing program, a very controversial decision to say the least, all six faculty members on CEPP were untenued. This pattern reinforced the tendency to place faculty in their first or second years at the College on committees like Community Council. Although it is true that senior faculty do not consider Community Council a major assignment and do not seek appointment to it,

At its final meeting in the 1987-88 academic year, C.G.A.'s Community Council voted to establish a Task Force on Governance [referred to as the Task Force on College Governance to distinguish it from the previous Task Force on Faculty Governance]. In the fall of 1988 President David Porter appointed eight persons to this group: Andrea Harren-Dechenne '90, a member of the Honor Code Commission, and Lisa Levy '89, C.G.A. Vice

All students and all members of the faculty and staff of Skidmore College shall be ipso facto members of the association.

Article IV. Officers and Organization

1. The President of the college shall be the president of the association. The Dean of the college shall be the vice-president. The other officers, elected by the student body, shall be a student president and two student vice-presidents who shall be seniors, and a secretary and treasurer who shall be juniors.
2. There shall be a Legislative Council consisting of the following members:
3. There shall be an Executive Board consisting of the following members:
4. There shall be an Honor Board consisting of the following members:
5. There shall be a Judicial Board consisting of the following members:
6. There shall be a Residence Council
7. There shall be a Day Student Council
8. There shall be a New York University Hospital Council
9. There shall be a Student Officers' Council
10. There shall be a National Students Association Council (Copies of student and faculty handbooks through the years are available in the Skidmore College Archives.)

This structure suggests that in practice the College Government Association functioned primarily as an administration-student organization [not one in which the faculty played a primary role]. The C.G.A. officers consisted of administrators and students, not faculty:

OFFICERS OF COLLEGE GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

President President of the College

Vice President Dean of the College

Student President

First Student Vice-President

Second Student Vice-President

Chairman of National Student Association Council

Student Representative to Alumnae Executive Board

Secretary

Treasurer

The handbooks explained that students were part of a community which governed itself:

The community government unites students and faculty and administration as they work together formulating policies and solving every day problems, learning by practice the democratic principles of individual freedom and initiative coupled with responsibility and cooperation. Active membership in a self-governing community and a share in an honor system that really works are, we believe, the best preparation for citizenship in a democratic society.

The C.G.A. functioned through a legislative council (the forerunner of Community Council), an executive board, an honor board, judicial board, residence council, and so on. The legislative council consisted of 23 members:

The president of the association as chairman

The vice-president of the association

Three members of the faculty elected by the faculty, two members from the resident faculty, one from the non resident faculty

The student president of the association

The student vice-presidents of the association

The secretary of the association

The treasurer of the association

Three seniors elected by the class

Three juniors elected by the class

Three sophomores elected by the class

The chairman of National Students Association Council

The chairman of the Day Student Council

Student representative to Alumnae Executive Board

The editor of "News", ex-officio

The by-laws directed that "The Legislative Council shall discuss and decide upon matters of community policy. Questions may be referred to the council by an administrative officer, by the faculty, or by any department of the College Government Association."

The 1951-52 student handbook claimed,

Our government runs effectively in that students, faculty, and administration work together to make a harmonious community. Because of the cooperation among the three groups, our association is called College Government. This mutual confidence is achieved by the strength of the Honor System which is the core of College Government. The President of the College, the Dean of the College, and elected representatives from the faculty and students comprise the boards. Our executive board and judicial board are made up of purely student representation while the honor board and legislative council are composed of representation from the students, faculty and administration. Within these boards campus policies are formulated and discussed. Through this organization we believe we have achieved a united community at Skidmore.

The student handbooks make clear that the principal duties of the Association revolved around the enforcement of the honor code which extended to academic, library, social and dormitory matters [not to educational policy,

The three student Vice Presidents

Four faculty members

One representative from the junior class and one

representative from the sophomore class.

The constitution stipulated that

The Community Council shall discuss and legislate upon matters of community policy, that is those matters which are the responsibility of both the faculty and administration as well as students. Questions of community policy may be referred to the Council by any administrative officer, the faculty, the Executive Board, or the Student Senate. The Council has the authority to appoint ad hoc committees and to refer any matter to the faculty, administration, or the Executive Board.

This revised C.G.A. constitution provided a new amending procedure. Any constituent unit could make a recommendation, and Community Council would study the change. The proposal then required "the ... approval by the faculty at a meeting." Only then would the student body have the opportunity to vote on the proposal. [This provision disappeared from the C.G.A. constitution by the 1970-71 edition.] There is no evidence, however, that the administration and the faculty contemplated that changes in administrative structure or faculty governance required the approval of the student body, C.G.A., or Community Council, though consultation with student leaders might be appropriate in some instances. Indeed, both administrative organization and faculty committees grew and changed throughout this period without the formal and prior approval of Community Council. Only changes in the C.G.A. constitution had to follow this process.

When C.G.A. considered changing its principal governing agent from legislative council to Community Council, the faculty handbook treated the latter as a continuation of the former; it simply noted that legislative council's function and membership were in the process of revision. ATd [(cz ATd [(cz ATd [(c(g)10(r)--10(a12(i)-9

Problems of a purely academic nature are referred directly to the faculty from all branches of the Association.

The Constitution of College Government Association, approved by faculty vote [no longer true], is printed in full in the Student Handbook.

The administrative structure began to make the adjustment from the relatively brief tenure of President Val Wilson [1957-64] to that of Joseph Palamountain [1964-1987]. In 1961 President Wilson brought to Skidmore Edwin M. Moseley as Dean of the Faculty, and thereby separated this office from that of the Dean of the College and allowed him to give undivided attention to the development of the faculty. President Palamountain in 1967-68 moved to have the title of Provost added to that of the Dean of Faculty, enhancing the authority of Edwin Moseley. When Norma Macrury retired in the later 1960's, the office of Dean of the College came to an end. (Letter of Edwin M. Moseley to the Faculty, August 7, 1970 explains the new arrangement without a Dean of the College.)

Student leaders worked most often with the Dean of Students, while the faculty worked most closely with the Dean of the Faculty, who happened to be the Provost also. Under Dean Moseley's leadership the faculty grew in numbers and new Ph.D.s of PMo 4mofeS tee-1(of)3

By the middle

deliberated, adopted resolutions, and submitted recommendations to the administration. The axis ran from faculty to administration and vice versa. C.G.A. and Community Council were not principal parties.

The administrative structure became more complicated in the 1970's. When Edwin Moseley retired as Provost and Dean of the Faculty in 1975-76, the College, influenced by the 1974 F.I.C. report and the growing complexity of its operations, decided that the responsibilities of the two positions were too much for any one person to assume. (President Palamountain explained why he believed a separate office of Provost was necessary. He pointed to recommendations by the 1967 Middle States visitation team:

...there is serious need of one or more new staff positions at the highest administrative level. Various suggestions were made about this, but the decision as to the function of new staff members is the business of the Trustees and the Administration. The President and the Dean of the Faculty certainly need assistants. Perhaps an executive vice president position would help. An officer whose sole function was institutional research and the formation of plans for the consideration of the President and the Board might also be considered.

The College responded with the additions of an Assistant Dean of the Faculty and an Assistant to the Provost [neither of which positions lasted more than a few years]. "Still the pressures on the single person serving as the Dean of the Faculty and Provost proved great." President Palamountain noted that the Faculty Investigating Committee in 1974 also urged additional administrative support. He felt pressures to complete the physical construction of the campus and to perform fund raising tasks. (See letter of President Joseph C. Palamountain, Jr. to John J. Thomas, President, Skidmore Chapter, American Association of University Professors, June 20, 1977.)

It was in these circumstances that the faculty in May of 1977 adopted a resolution that the chairperson of CAPTS shall call a meeting of faculty members of key committees to discuss the state of college affairs and to assess present relations between the faculty and administration. This procedure became fixed in succeeding years. (Addendum to Minutes of the Faculty Meeting, May 10, 1977.)

As a result, two offices came into being where there had been one, and David Marcell became the Provost (1977-present) (Memo to Faculty and Administrative Staff from President Palamountain on the appointment of Professor Marcell as Provost, June 20, 1977.) and Eric J. Weller the Dean of the Faculty (1976-present). Later to make clear that the Provost stood in rank equivalent to the Vice President for Business and the Vice President for Development, the office became known as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and all three Vice Presidents reported to the President. In this arrangement, all Deans reported to the Provost.

The successful evolution of the University Without Walls and other programs, including the summer school, conferences, and institutes, led to the creation of the position of Dean of Special Programs, first held by Mark Gelber and now by Donald McCormack, with a growing staff. The Dean of Students, Claire Olds (1964-77) [succeeded by Frances Hoffmann (1978-88) and now Robbie Nayman (1988-present)], became the Dean of Student Affairs with two assistant/associate Deans to provide support in areas of academic advising [Jon Ramsey] and student life [Anita Burnham Steigerwald]. (There had been a short lived office called the Dean of

under the rules of the faculty handbook and conformed to the administrative structure which made the Dean of Faculty their spokesperson in the administration, while students operated under the rules of the C.G.A. constitution and conformed to a structure which made the Dean of Student Affairs their spokesperson.

The growth of the administration, in part a reflection of increases in student population, faculty development, demands for fund raising and improved alumni relations, and requirements of reform legislation and new policies at state and federal levels, created complexities which continue to the present time. A case in point is the University Without Walls. Established with the approval of state authorities which treat it as an additional academic department of the College, the U.W.W. in many respects operates as a distinctive school on the same campus. The U.W.W. has some students who attend regular classes here and reside in dormitories, but many more of its students are non residential, adults beyond the 17-22 age group; some are inmates at Great Meadow Correctional Facility and at Washington Correctional Facility in Comstock, New York . The U.W.W. has its own admissions committee and registrar. Its staff include people with advanced degrees, some of whom teach part-time at Skidmore, and who perform functions, such as curriculum planning and advising for U.W.W. students, which parallel those of Skidmore faculty. The U.W.W. staff finds itself therefore in an anomalous position, partially a department at the College and partially outside, partially administration and partly faculty. Its students, for the most part, fall outside of the C.G.A. in spite of the constitutional provisions that all students are members of the association. Only those who reside on the campus and pay student activity fees can vote or hold offices in the C.G.A. ([Return to the beginning of the Report](#))

IV. C.G.A. Constitutional Reform.

In 1971 and again in 1978 student leaders in Community Council pressed for major revisions of the C.G.A. constitution. The 1971-72 Student Handbook referred to the C.G.A. constitution as an "interim constitution." Community Council discussed student leaders' initiatives for change--initiatives that reached back to 1968, and authorized a constitutional convention, composed mainly of students, to prepare a less cumbersome document than the one in existence since 1959. Once formed, the convention moved to consider wholesale changes in the way the entire College functioned: in essence, they believed a new C.G.A. should become the College government. Activist student leaders thought that a more powerful C.G.A. would overcome problems associated with student apathy and make the student interest potent. The further they proceeded, the more they came to realize that without the administration and the faculty brought into the proceedings, the more hopeless became the prospect for a massive overhaul of the constitution of the C.G.A. Community Council then appointed a subcommittee to review the work of the convention. (See Minutes of Community Council, February 24, 1972.)

The difficulties of agreeing on a method for adopting changes which affected administrative organization and faculty governance posed an insuperable obstacle to a revamped C.G.A. constitution which would become the College constitution, and these difficulties remain to the present day. When the convention closed its doors, nothing major had come from it. The interim constitution continued in force until 1978--and beyond.

During this period, the Community Council did make reports to the faculty meeting about its activities and in particular about the progress of the constitutional convention. In more recent times, the council has not continued this practice. It should be noted, however, that Community Council can get on the agenda of any faculty meeting and the President of the College, as presiding officer of the meeting, can recognize council members. There has been no change in policy or procedure in this regard.

The Student Handbook for 1978©79 included no constitution at all because once again there was interest in effecting a major overhaul. In December of 1976 Community Council brought a motion to the floor of the faculty meeting asking for the creation of a constitutional commission. It explained that

There exist at Skidmore two distinct forms of government, one governing the students, the other the faculty. At the present time the faculty and the student handbooks have overlapping but different systems of governance. The responsibility of this commission will be to investigate the

possibility of a consistent form of government for the Skidmore College Community.
(Community Council Memo to the Faculty, December 3, 1976, Motion to be presented at the
next faculty meeting. Note that the Faculty Handbooks until 1977 added to the confusion by
placing alphabetically all faculty a

to resolve. The elev

administrations from 1977 to the present. The Task Force is indebted to her for the letter and the many relevant documents she provided.) The key compromise was the content of a new Article III to the C.G.A. constitution [reprinted in full below]. This provision satisfied the Task Force that the principle of tripartite governance would be preserved, and freed the C.G.A. President to proceed in the remaining sections of the constitution with attempts to make the student government component more effective.

The resulting constitution was ratified in the spring of 1984 by vote of the student body and by individual administrators and faculty, if any, who chose to participate in the process. Its terms went into effect in 1985-86. It incorporated much of what had previously been by-laws into the text of the constitution, making the document very lengthy and merging fundamental principles and operating codes. The most interesting changes appear in the preamble and articles III and IV. Note the important additions [upper case letters] to these

Meanwhile in 1982-83 a faculty handbook in the booklet style returned. Unsatisfied, the faculty sought a revised edition which would be better organized, up to date, accurate, consistent in style, and produced under the supervision of Faculty Council. Since that year, the faculty lived through continual revision, which did not produce a current, authoritative faculty handbook until 1988-89. This handbook has a section on College Government Association Committees, which states:

Faculty members are also full members of the College Government Association (CGA), an organization concerned with the quality of student life on campus. The following CGA

The careless application of the terms tripartite and community lead to additional difficulties. Tripartite suggests that the major lines of division in the college are students, faculty, and administration. But these groups are themselves not homogeneous, and are divided over issues and roles, especially as the College has grown and become more complex. Students consist of residential and non residential students, those who pay student activity fees and those who do not, and U.W.W. students, some in correctional facilities at Comstock. These are differences which did not exist back in the 1950's. The C.G.A. should address this varied student population of the 1980's, for its constitution says that all students are ipso facto members of C.G.A.

The Faculty are divided in many ways, one of the more significant for governance purposes being the division between those who are eligible to attend faculty meetings and serve on faculty committees and those who are not. As recently as 1982-83 only full time teachers, ten named administrators, librarians, part-time faculty [without vote], and staff members invited by the President [without vote], and any administrator appointed to the faculty by the Board could attend meetings. More recently departmental assistants and administrators without faculty rank have been added; they may have access to the floor but cannot vote. Only full-time members of the faculty and faculty holding shared appointments may vote for or serve as faculty representatives on elective or appointive committees. Advisors for the University Without Walls make up one of a number of groups which seek opportunities for participation in faculty governance. They see themselves playing roles that are as much faculty as administrative, but so far they have been denied. There are avenues, however, for review of these kinds of questions, and Faculty Council is the committee to hear proposals for change.

In the administrative structure, it is easy enough to understand the roles of the President, Vice Presidents, and

cross representational committees and pressure group politics in areas of mutual interests. ([Return to the beginning of the Report](#))

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Faculty Council should periodically review the adequacy and effectiveness of student representatives on faculty committees, and assume or delegate to individual committees the responsibilities for conducting an annual orientation for new committee members. In addition, Faculty Council should hold an orientation at the beginning of each academic year on faculty governance for C.G.A. executive officers and Senators. Faculty Council should keep the Dean of Student Affairs apprised of such orientation sessions for student representatives and welcome members of student affairs staff who wish to attend.
2. It should maintain communications with groups like U.W.W. advisors, coaches, and others who want to attend faculty meetings and participate in some way in faculty governance. The University Without Walls staff should discuss how it defines faculty status within U.W.W. and who is full-time and who is part-time faculty. It can then review these criteria with Faculty Council and CAPTS to see if a suitable agreement can be reached, which will allow all faculty at the College to enjoy the privileges associated with full-time and part-time status. When appropriate, Faculty Council should make recommendations about these issues to the faculty.
3. Faculty Council should consider the wisdom and feasibility of removing certain committees, such as the Campus Environment Committee, the Affirmative Action Committee, and the Benefits Committee [and any other committee which addresses issues of concern to various groups on campus and are not the sole or primary responsibility of the faculty] from faculty governance to a place more accessible to others in the college--lower level administrators, part-time faculty, coaches, support staff, for example. Faculty should continue to participate in such committees.
4. Faculty council should make a progress report on these recommendations to the faculty, administration, C.G.A. Senate, and to any existing all-college body, such as a revised Community Council, by December of 1989.

C. The Administration.

1. The administration, which deals with student officers of C.G.A. and the faculty, plays a crucial role as mediators and leaders. They have long years of service which provide them with the unique opportunity to maintain the historical memory of the institution and to bring that perspective to controversies which will arise from time to time. They should not assume that because they know the history and inner workings of governance that everyone else does. This is particularly true of their role on Community Council, where Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Deans with years of collective service sit with four frequently very junior faculty and student representatives whose institutional ties at the time of service is two or three years. These administrators should play an active leadership and teaching role keeping faculty alerted to student concerns and students informed of faculty responsibilities and in so doing make clear their own positions.
2. The upper level administration in the president's staff should also discuss with the professional staff ways by which members of the middle and lower level administration can feel that they are part of a structure and process which value their professional judgments on issues of college-wide importance. Much is said about the need for faculty development, interdisciplinarity, and thinking in college-wide terms, and surely a similar case can be made for middle and lower level administrators. The President's staff should make clear that it encourages the development of administrators at all levels who are familiar with college issues and can help address them.
- 3.

4. At the beginning of each academic year, the Pr

Without a compelling demand for such a document from a variety of constituencies, it would seem premature to prepare one. The historical record of past attempts by the C.G.A. in this direction and the experience of faculty re-writing their own handbook recommend against such an exercise. Finally, there is no authority for this Task Force to serve as a constitutional convention for the College.

Dean of Faculty

Dean of Students

Student President

3 student Vice Presidents

4 faculty

2 students, one junior and one sophomore

1970-71

President of the College as Chairman

Dean of the College as Vice President

Dean of Faculty

Dean of Students

Student President

2 student Vice Presidents

4 faculty

2 students, one junior and one sophomore

1977-78

President of the College as Chairman

Dean of Studies

Dean of Faculty

Dean of Students

Student President

2 student Vice Presidents

4 faculty

2 students, one junior and one sophomore

The Vice President for Development and Alumni Affairs

The Secretary of the College

The Dean of Faculty

The Dean of Student Affairs

The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, as a nonvoting Member

The Executive Committee

A Senator appointed by the Executive Committee

The Senior Class President

4 faculty members appointed by Faculty Council for two-year terms, two of whom are appointed each year

1988-89

The President of the College as Chair

The Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

The Vice President for Business Affairs

The Vice President for Development and Alumni Affairs

The Dean of the Faculty

The Dean of Student Affairs

The Assistant Dean of student Affairs, as a nonvoting Member

The Executive Committee [President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Co-curricular Affairs, Vice President for Communications, Vice President for Financial Affairs]

A Senator appointed by the Executive Committee

The Senior Class President

4 Faculty members appointed by Faculty Council for two-year terms, two of whom are appointed each year

[\(Return to the beginning of the Report\)](#)