Report on Academic Governance
2008-2009 Academic Year

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1 Accomplishments in Academic Governance 2008-2009

1.1 Reorganization of Faculty Governance

Faculty Council, in conjunction with the University Committee on Academic Governance, developed a comprehensive set of amendments to the MSU bylaws that significantly reorganizes the structure of academic governance. Academic governance is restructured into the form illustrated in the following image:

MSU University-level Governance System

Academic Congress

Board of Trustees

At Large
Faculty Members

The Steering Committee

Faculty Senate

University Council

UCFT

UCUAP

UCSA

UCGS

UCAG

UCFA

UCC

Athletic Council

President

Provost

Liaison

Liaison

Liaison

There are currently three large bodies in which faculty participate within the Michigan State University system of academic governance:

- Faculty Council: consisting of elected faculty representatives from each MSU College,
- Academic Council: whose faculty component consists of all members of Faculty Council, and
- Academic Senate: consisting of all eligible MSU faculty.

These are replaced by three large bodies in governance in which faculty will serve. Naming of the three large bodies will be as follows:

- Faculty Senate: consisting of elected faculty representatives from each MSU College,
• University Council: whose faculty component consists of all members of Faculty Senate, and
• Academic Assembly: consisting of all eligible MSU faculty.

Currently, the Faculty Council is subordinate to the Academic Council. The new structure elevates the Faculty Council to independent status with regard to areas reserved to faculty in the bylaws. The overarching purpose of the new structure is to provide the faculty with a place to deliberate, debate, and reach consensus, with its recommendations going directly to the administration and Board for approval and action, rather than passing through a second sieve. This will strengthen the voice of the faculty on the issues already reserved to faculty in our Bylaws.

The new structure has two deliberative, legislative bodies with different primary responsibilities: Faculty Congress (the successor to Faculty Council), and University Council (succeeding Academic Council). Setting the agendas of the two central bodies and referring matters to committees would be The Steering Committee (TSC), consisting of 5 faculty elected at large by direct ballot of the full Academic Senate and the chairpersons of all standing committees. The Chairperson of Academic Assembly and one additional undergraduate student, the President of the Council of Graduate Students and one additional graduate student, and the Provost (or designee) will sit ex-officio, but with voting rights on all matters not exclusively reserved for faculty. The Steering Committee would make jurisdictional decisions on the appropriate body to review issues. The Faculty Congress will elect its chair, who will convene both the Faculty Congress and The Steering Committee itself.

The bylaw amendments also modified some standing committees. In addition, a careful review of the bylaws was undertaken and rules were unified among University-level standing committees wherever possible.

1.2 Academic Year Task Force

A task force was assembled to address the University calendar. The decision to change the start of Fall semester led to an examination of the existing calendar and questions such as semester length, semester beginning dates, holiday selection and summer recess duration. The task force conducted a survey of faculty and students and reached the following recommendations which will be addressed in 2009-2010:

• Based on widespread support revealed by a survey of the MSU community and on a comparative review of the MSU calendar with those of universities both nation-wide and

in Michigan, the Task Force believes that MSU should adopt a fall semester with 14 instructional weeks and a one-week finals period, beginning after Labor Day. Such an academic calendar would align MSU's fall semester with Michigan State Law which
requires that K-12 public schools begin after Labor Day and, in the view of the committee, provides benefits for all students and faculty.

- Based on strong support in the MSU community survey, the Task Force also believes that Fall Graduation should be held at the end of fall exam period.

- The Task Force has developed two models for the spring semester, one a two-week "J-Term" period followed by a conventional 14-week instructional semester (which leaves summer recess at the current length), the other a 14-week instructional period and a longer summer recess.

- The Task Force believes that Faculty and Academic Councils should also consider the following possible additions to the MSU calendar, noting the trade-offs which will be described in the final report:
  
  o A two-day Fall Break.

  o A two-day President's Day Break and a delayed spring break.

- The Task Force believes that graduate professional programs that request to do so should be exempt from the changes to the academic calendar that result from this process of calendar reform.

This was a very large project representing the culmination of several years of work and is a significant accomplishment for academic governance.

1.3 Definition of Minor Programs

Academic and Faculty councils endorsed proposals from the University Curriculum Committee that clarified the role of minors at MSU. Minors are a relatively new category of academic programs and the University. Proposal 4 establishes a minimum of 12 out of 15 or more credits
required for the Minor, and they should be unique to the Minor, in the absence that determination falls to the discretion of the Departments that control the Minor. Proposal 5 indicated that a student cannot earn a Minor in the same Major. UCC and UCAP are working on distinguishing Minors from Specializations.

1.4 Changes in Policies on Granting Tenure and Operating Principles of the Tenure System

A motion passed to approve revisions to the Policies on Granting Tenure & Operating Principles of the Tenure System developed by the University Committee on Faculty and Tenure, with an eye towards bringing things up to date and aligning these policies with other policies in the University. The most significant changes are as follows:
- Resolution of an inconsistency between proposed Operating principle #7 and the Bylaws for Academic Governance
- Clarification that tenure at Michigan State University resides in the University (see proposed Operating Principle #8)
- Elimination of review by the University Committee on Faculty Tenure of requests for a non-tenure system appointment that immediately follows an appointment in the tenure system
- Clarification that a tenure system faculty member receive written information about the unit's expectations and procedures for reappointment, promotion and tenure
- Deletion of the option to appoint Instructors in the tenure system
- Deletion of the option to reappoint an Assistant Professor with tenure

2 Executive Summary and Representative Remarks

The major focus for the year was the implementation of the recommendations of the Faculty Voice task forces. The recommended plan was approved by academic governance in Spring, 2008, but had to be converted into a set of Bylaw amendments. These amendments were developed by the University Committee on Academic Governance and then submitted to the bodies for approval.

There was considerable concern about the changes to the welcome week as put in place by the Provost. Though the consensus supported the changes, it was questioned as to if this process should have included the opinion of the faculty. Some units, such as James Madison College, have been utilizing welcome week for academic purposes and will have to restructure their welcome process. It was decided that the entire academic calendar needed a careful reexamination with respect to balance with other programs such as K-12 education, the disparity in semester durations, and the question of placement of graduation prior to the completion of final exams. A task force addressed this subject and will present finding in 2009-2010.

3 Agenda for the Coming Year

While the faculty voice bylaw amendments are complete and have been approved by the Faculty Council, they still need to be approved by the board of trustees, who has requested a review and
commentary by Professor Robert Banks. This process will likely require additional negotiation before a final set of bylaw amendments is put into place.

The academic year task force has presented recommendations for changes in the academic calendar. A priority in the coming year is further development and implementation of those changes.