

## **Possible Changes in the Standing Committee Structure of the University Senate—Continuing the Discussion, 3/17/2015--Observations and Thoughts from Members of the Senate Executive Committee**

These observations and thoughts follow-up on our communication on 2/10/2015 that was designed to aid in beginning the discussion, with appropriate changes to update them based upon feedback and discussions over the last month, with a focus on two initial aspects of committee structure revisions: forming a new Research Committee and merging the current Admission and Student Aid Committee with the Student Affairs Committee.

In Senate President Michael Spring's January 8, 2015 Senate Matters column in the University Times, he noted in the last paragraph:

“...[I]t may be time to look again at how we share governance at the University. In the 1940s, Pitt was a small regional university. The Senate, in some ways, still reflects the structure of that University. By 1970, Pitt had established itself as an important comprehensive University with the potential for national stature. Today, Pitt is a recognized national leader and has begun to establish a significant global presence. Some of the standing committees of the Senate have transformed their roles and taken on new, more appropriate, roles, but others have not. For example, the University is more highly dependent on research funds and international activities, yet we have no committees focused on these areas. We are much larger and more complex and while administrative roles have proliferated, the Senate is not much larger than it was 60 years ago. The Senate needs to be sure it is structured and empowered to deal with the issues the University will face. I fear that if we do not, despite the dedication and hard work of our administrative colleagues we may not always make the wisest decisions as an institution. During another period of great change and challenge, the faculty must be committed to playing an active role in helping the administration to shape and direct the future of our great University.”

**A body like the University Senate functions and is managed best when the constituent units fully cover all of the important issues, but with the smallest number of such units and with as little overlap between these units as feasible.** The current Standing Committee structure has been in place with fairly few changes for over 5 decades, a time of enormous change in the University overall. As required by the Bylaws of the University Senate (Article VI, Section 2), the Executive Committee has been studying the Standing Committee structure for almost 3 years—especially so in the last year and a half. During that time the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Advocacy (formerly Anti-discriminatory Policies), Plant Utilization and Planning and Governmental Relations (formerly Commonwealth Relations) Committees have restructured to varying degrees. Others remain substantially unchanged. **As the result of our study, we now make the following two major suggestions for further changes in our committee structure for careful further consideration by the entire University Senate.** If these suggestions are accepted and enacted, the total number of committees would not be increased and existing overlaps between committees would be reduced greatly or eliminated. Even at 15, the number of committees is large for the structure and workings of the Senate. These changes are the next phase of committee restructuring, and this work will continue into the next academic year via the newly elected Executive Committee members.

### **Two Suggestions for Senate Committee Change:**

**1. Form a new Research Committee.** The University's role in research has grown enormously in the last few decades. We have found that the absence of a research committee greatly impedes Senate deliberations about research issues. While a newly formed Research Committee would have the prerogative and duty to prepare its own Mission Statement, we felt that it would be very helpful to develop a draft initial Mission Statement while this discussion was underway. With much input from faculty members who are both researchers and active in the Senate and Senior Administrators, we have developed the following draft:

*Mission Statement of the Research Committee of the University Senate—DRAFT 5, 2/7/ 2015*

*The Senate Research Committee focuses on research within the University of Pittsburgh, non-funded and funded, including relevant policies and procedures, research operations, research regulation and compliance, support of researchers, and the management of intellectual property, to assist the University Senate in its provision of advice and recommendations about these issues to the senior administration of the university and, also, to faculty, staff and students.*

*The Senate Research Committee communicates with researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and the various research offices of the University, including the Vice-Chancellor for Research Conduct and Compliance, the Vice-Provost for Research, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Biomedical Research, Health Sciences, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical Research, Health Sciences, the Executive Director of the Health Policy Institute, and, as needed and appropriate, research offices at the School/College or Department levels. It communicates with the University Research Council (URC). The activities of the Research Committee of the University Senate are complementary to the related activities of the URC, which provides advice directly to the Provost and the Vice-Provost for Research, and whose members (including the two members who are nominated by the University Senate) are appointed by the Provost. The other major mission of the URC, to aid faculty members in identifying funding and liaisons and collaborations for research, is not a part of the mission of the Senate Research Committee.*

So far, this recommendation has received mostly favorable feedback. The main reservations have been with making certain that the actions of a Senate Research Committee that are related to the actions of the URC would not be duplicative of or in conflict with the actions of the URC. **See the draft resolution on page 3.**

**2. Merge the current Admissions and Student Aid and Student Affairs Committees** into one, perhaps called **Student Admissions, Aid and Affairs**, which would decrease potential overlaps and would provide a more appropriately sized role for a single committee. The committee chairs agree and recommend approval. We encourage them, if possible, to consider expanding their mission to include graduate as well as undergraduate students. **See the draft resolution on page 3.**

**Additionally, our prior suggestions to merge the current Library Committee and University Press Committee** into one were not well received by either the current Library Committee or the University Press Committee because of the differences between the Libraries and the University Press. We have decided to forego this suggestion in this revision. The Senate Executive Committee of Academic Year 2016 will need to work with the University Press Committee to make certain that it functions well as a University Senate Committee. We encourage the members of these committees to provide greater and more active leadership and agenda-setting roles within the committee, as opposed to the more passive role adopted in the past, to increase its ability to provide better advice and recommendations to Senior Administration.

To continue the discussion and input on these ideas for change, and their associated resolutions, we plan to introduce the two attached resolutions as motions at the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Faculty Assembly (FA) and to follow immediately with motions to postpone formal discussion and voting upon them until the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of FA to allow another month of time for members of the University Senate to give these ideas further thoughtful consideration and discussion.

We encourage members of the University Senate to post comments or questions on the Senate web site that has a page specifically for this purpose or to give them to Lori Molinaro in the Senate Office. A member of the Executive Committee will contact you personally to address them.

## **Draft Resolutions**

### **Creation of a Senate Standing Research Committee**

Whereas, the University's role in research has grown enormously in the last few decades and the University Senate has found that the absence of a research committee impedes its deliberations on recommendations to the University Administration about research issues; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Faculty Assembly approves of the creation of a Senate Standing Research Committee, effective May 20, 2015. The Senate Research Committee shall focus its activities on research policies and procedures, research operations, research regulation and compliance, and the management of intellectual property for funded and unfunded research within the University of Pittsburgh.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Merging Admissions/Student Aid and Student Affairs**

Whereas, the Senate Standing Committee on Admissions and Student Aid and the Senate Standing Committee on Student Affairs address student related topics; therefore be it

Resolved, that Faculty Assembly approves the merger of the current Admissions and Student Aid and Student Affairs Committees into the Student Admissions, Aid and Affairs Committee to take effect May 20, 2015; and be it further

Resolved, that all elected faculty members of the existing committees shall serve on the new committee until their terms expire and a quorum shall be the smallest number of voting members that exceeds one-half of the number of elected faculty members of the new committee at that time. Further, elections to the committee shall not take place until the number of existing members will fall below nine for a given election cycle.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Dissolution of the University Press Committee**

Whereas, the University Press committee voted 6 yes to 3 no that it should become a Provost-office appointed committee, believing that the business of advising the Press can be carried out more efficiently and without the strict constraints or requirements of being part of the Senate; and

Whereas, this new committee would be better able to directly advise the Press on its regular conduct of business, review of series, and individual projects, etc., which the current structure completes, are critical to the operation of the Press, therefore be it

Resolved, the University Press Committee as it currently stands be dissolved and reconstituted as a Provost-office appointed committee, effective May 20, 2015.