

University of Missouri-St Louis Quality Review

Faculty Senate and University Assembly

Sources of Information

- The Faculty Senate and University Assembly Self Study Document
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with Vice Chancellors and the Faculty Senate and University Assembly Steering Committee.
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with the Council of Deans
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with faculty stakeholders
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with staff.
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with students.
- Meeting of the committee and the consultant with the campus governance leadership.
- The consultant's report.

Preamble

The report written by the governance leadership was well done and very informative for the panel members, almost all of whom had little or no knowledge of the activities of the Faculty Senate and University Assembly, since they had not served on either. Thus it was very helpful to the review panel. The response to the review, as measured by attendance at the open meetings was essentially a yawn, and this suggests to the writer that the Faculty Senate and University Assembly functions very well and was not really in need of any major changes in policies and procedures. That is shared governance at UM-St. Louis is alive and well. The Self Study Document made some cogent suggestions for action and others arose as a consequence of the discussions during the site visit on May 18, 2007. The writers of the Self Study Document and especially the Review Panel recognized that this review was somewhat different from the more conventional ones conducted. The Faculty Senate and University Assembly have only advisory authority and not final decision making authority. This makes measuring its impact on learning outcomes desired by the administration indirect and difficult to measure. Performance metrics regarding the Senate/Assembly's success in representing and communicating the faculty's position on issues before the administration might be more appropriate than metrics tied directly to student learning outcomes.

Stakeholder Inputs

The vice chancellors were most concerned that the review be accomplished since such a review of campus governance had never been done before. The context of the review within the goal of continuous improvement reviews was explained to the committee. A major impetus for placing the Faculty Senate and University Assembly on the schedule for five-year quality reviews was the up-coming campus accreditation exercise. Comments from the few vice

chancellors who attended the session included suggestions that perhaps there are too many committees, that the bylaws are too wordy, that the campus is out of step with the other Missouri campuses and that there had been no analysis of the effectiveness of, for example, the Curriculum Committee in the past. Other comments addressed the observation that the Budget and Planning Committee now functioned transparently and is truly involved in planning and that the operation was much improved over that prior to Chancellor George's insistence that a faculty member be chair and not the Chancellor. With respect to the effectiveness of committees, anecdotal information suggested that the committees were working and that some of the committees which appear to be duplicative are required by the *Collected Rules and Regulations*.

The meeting of the committee and the consultant with the Council of Deans was a more productive one. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences thinks the new format for faculty governance works well and he does not agree with some anecdotal comments from deans that since they do not get to vote, there is no reason for them to attend meetings. He is particularly satisfied with the functioning of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. General discussion around the issue of faculty participation in "service" work led to some disagreement. Some believe that junior faculty members should be more involved in campus-wide committee work because only a relatively small number of faculty members are involved, but the dean of the largest college and some panel members support the notion that until tenure is awarded junior colleagues should limit their service work to the department and their professional societies. Not all agreed with this view but it has been standard practice on the campus essentially from day one. A criticism from the Honors' College is that it has no representation on the Faculty Senate. Other problems include those of very small colleges when it is difficult to find enough faculty members to meet the distribution requirement on certain committees. At the conclusion of this session it was generally agreed that the commitment to shared governance by the administration was top down, and that the driver for the improvements in the area could be deemed to be the outgoing President, Elson Floyd.

Again the attendance by faculty at the faculty stakeholders session was low, with only five visitors, but the discussion was lively and very useful. The general feelings about the operations and effectiveness of the Faculty Senate and University Assembly were quite positive. Those who had participated directly indicated that they had gained much from the experience. The committees appeared to be working well and those who had been involved did not feel that there are too many committees. Criticisms included a lack of communication between representatives and their constituencies, and the absences of any major regular communication from the leadership, and the faculty in general. Regular communication from the Faculty Senate and University Assembly Chair via a List-serve to the faculty, as had been the case several years ago, was a suggestion for improvement. Some thought that committee terms should be longer, three as opposed to two years but the Senate staff member who attended this session spoke of the problems in persuading faculty members to stand for election to committees. In Kansas City, for example, the Executive Committee members, the equivalent of our Steering Committee serve two-year terms.

Perhaps the most revealing feature of the meetings with stakeholders was that with staff members. Staff members are in many ways the face of the University but they feel left out of the governance process. For example there is no representation of the staff on the Recruitment, Admissions and Retention Committee, but the fact is that the staff members are typically the person with whom prospective students first have contact. They feel that there is often a token staff member on committees and that those on the more important committees come from a small number who are prepared to participate. Only exempt employees have the freedom to participate and even then many are often loath to speak out for fear of reprisal. Since the President of the Staff Association serves on the Budget and Planning Committee, the individual is limited to a single term and is thus not really able to contribute effectively. A suggestion that perhaps two staff members, President and Vice President represent the staff, each for a two-year term on the Budget and Planning Committee as well as on the Assembly and even perhaps the Chancellor's Cabinet was made.

Strengths

- The system works well, is quite transparent and shared governance really exists at UM-St. Louis.
- Recent reorganization of the governance system has generally improved it.
- The administration has always supported a form of shared governance and recently this support has become much stronger.
- Committees of the Senate and University Assembly appear to function quite well.

Weaknesses

- Participation by staff could be improved.
- Not everyone is familiar with the system.
- Information about issues dealt with by the Senate and University Assembly and actions taken are not being communicated effectively to the campus at large.
- Communication at the unit level by unit representatives is similarly not very effective.
- Not all the deans take the governance process seriously because they don't have a vote.

Recommendations

- Write a brief, general mission statement for the Senate and University Assembly.
- Re-established the Senate List-serve for communication with the campus community
- Review the role of the staff in campus governance with a view to increasing representation and terms of service.
- Provide some representation of the Honors College to membership in the Senate and University Assembly.
- Consider increasing committee service terms to three years.
- Find a way to improve attendance of the deans and vice chancellors and to have them become more involved.

- Encourage the administration to commit to a formal level of compensation, or in kind compensation, and have the details included in the Operating Rules of the Senate and University Assembly.

Summary

There is not much wrong with the system of campus governance at UM-St. Louis. The review went very well and since the recommendations, sent independently by panel members to the panel chair were essentially in agreement, the conclusions of the report are credible. One area where the writer disagrees with some of the comments by panel members and the external consultant is in the number of committees and the length of the bylaws and rules. Both areas were revamped only a few years ago after an extensive review and thus the writer believes both should be left alone at the moment.