

29 November 2016

Dr. E. Paulette Isaac-Savage
Associate Provost, Planning, Assessment, and Accreditation
Office of Academic Affairs
421 Woods Hall
University of Missouri-St. Louis

Dear Dr. Isaac-Savage,

This communicates my five-year program review of the University of Missouri-St. Louis Faculty Senate and Assembly. This review is based on the self-study report, CRR 300.040, and meetings with various constituents held on 20 October, 2016. I appreciate the time and attention given by the many faculty, staff, students, and administrators who met with the review team that day. I also appreciate the patience shown in waiting this overdue review, and I apologize for the delay in providing this document.

The team agreed to create two separate and independent reviews, that of the internal team members and this review. We did, however, speak briefly at the end of our day about what themes had arisen from the conversations. My perspective on the UMSL Faculty Senate comes from nine years of service on the Missouri S&T Faculty Senate as a departmental representative, including service in various offices and on committees, and also my eight years as Assistant Chair for Environmental Engineering. I have organized this report into major themes which were revealed during the review process.

Bottom line up front: the Faculty Senate at the University of Missouri – St. Louis is a well-functioning organization that fulfills its designated role. The issues that became apparent to this reviewer are common in the context of shared governance in academia, and common at representative institutions. Although explored in greater detail below, a simple list of the observations of note are:

- Faculty Senate acts as the voice of and conduit to the faculty for the Chancellor and Provost.
- Dissemination of information from the Senate to all faculty is not assured.
- Non-eligible faculty, notably adjunct faculty, are not represented.
- Training is needed for faculty service on committees, notably Budget and Planning.
- Students and Staff do not feel the Assembly acts as their voice.

Prominent Issues

Shared Governance There was evidence at all levels that the current UMSL Chancellor relies on the Faculty Senate as the voice of the faculty, and also views the Faculty Senate Chairperson and the steering committee as a sounding board. The University Assembly was described by most groups as a place for dissemination of information. The interim Provost expressed a strong desire to further increase the role of the faculty in governing the university. However, should the current good faith relationship change, the Faculty Senate has only modest power via the bylaws. A UMSL Chancellor has the option to discount the role of the faculty senate. If the current good relationship could be codified in the bylaws, future faculty senates and administrators would inherit the structure which has led to that good relationship.

Effectiveness Discussion with both Senators and Senate Chairs confirmed the impression from the self-study that many or perhaps all committees function appropriately. As is the case in any organization, it seems some committees barely meet and others have heavier loads. Generally the committees show themselves to be effective through their actions. There were nonetheless a few issues that should be highlighted:

Training The need for training is a significant issue for some committees. It is recommended that the Faculty Senate consider this issue and establish a training program for those new to committee membership.

Budget and Planning The fairly new CFO noted good interaction with the Budget and Planning Committee, having meetings “of substance”. I was surprised that B&P meets just once during the Fall Semester and “ramps up” in Spring. At S&T, the equivalent, Budgetary Affairs, meets much more regularly and looks in detail into aspects of the budget. To do such work requires training specific to the university budget process and some members of the committee felt poorly prepared to serve. Given the positive view expressed by the CFO and my own knowledge of the lack of knowledge of department chairs about many specifics of budgets, I suggest the vice chancellor for administration-CFO be asked to offer an annual series of small workshops/seminars on the budget.

Committee on Committees I wish S&T had a committee with a similar role. The process of staffing of committees at UMSL is impressive.

Faculty Senate Effectiveness The Senate and Assembly may not be as effective as they could be. These organizations at UMSL and S&T have CRR-derived powers, as stated in UMSL’s Bylaws:

...responsibility for recommending and implementing educational policy, particularly in areas of curriculum, degree requirements, methods of instruction, research, requirements for admission, student affairs, and faculty status.

The Faculty Senate at S&T exercises this power, but it is not clear the Faculty Senate at UMSL does so. The contrast I saw was that the administration at S&T is aware they must work with the Faculty Senate to accomplish any change related to faculty or student academics. The administration at UMSL did not express a similar awareness of such Faculty Senate power. It might simply be that S&T has made more changes in recent memory than UMSL and those changes have been more contentious, and, as a result, the power of the faculty to block administration-desired changes is more obvious at S&T. The one example at UMSL which seems to highlight this issue was the process by which budget cuts were determined, in which Faculty Senate apparently was informed near the end rather than being involved throughout.

Committees concerned with employment conditions The UMSL committees address what faculty do but not, I think, how we work. UMSL might consider whether existing committees address issues of academic freedom and conditions of employment. The two examples from S&T are a committee on academic freedom and standards and one on personnel.

At S&T, the Academic Freedom and Standards Committee is routinely called upon when changes to academic standards are proposed, but also when the question of Academic Freedom may be at issue, such as almost any proposed change to the CRR. UMSL’s Academic Advisory Committee is partially analogous, but has a more limited role. I could find no UMSL Assembly/Faculty Senate committee with a similar focus on the interests of the faculty. Based on 300.040, it might be that the Steering Committee has such authority under “...to discuss matters of policy concerning the University of Missouri-St. Louis”. However, the broad charge of the Academic Advisory Committee in “making recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on academic issues affecting the University” could include issues of academic freedom. Nonetheless, based on the reported accomplishments, no committee currently seems to take on issues potentially impacting academic freedom.

Another committee function I did not find in my review is a committee concerned with “policies on the conditions of appointment, employment, compensation, and retirement of faculty and administrative officers.” At S&T the Personnel Committee with this charge reviews proposed changes to policies and

the CRR and informs the Faculty Senate of such concerns, which has on occasion allowed the faculty to object in a timely way.

Representation of UMSL The UMSL representatives to the Intercampus Faculty Council (IFC) are active participants and consistently provide the perspective of the St. Louis campus in discussions at IFC. This topic was not in the self-study nor brought up in the review; the observation is based on this reviewer's service on IFC for four of the past five years.

Representation of Faculty The current unionization effort provided an opportunity to provocatively ask why the faculty were unhappy and in what way the faculty senate was failing to act as the voice of the faculty. The prima facie response from the faculty who attended meetings was to deny both premises. However, further response mentioned adjunct faculty and NTT faculty as potentially unhappy or underserved. UMSL has a significant fraction of both amongst those doing instruction. Based on the FactBook and making the assumption that the number of adjuncts is the number of part-time instructional staff less the number of graduate assistants, there are 89 adjuncts, 172 NTT (153 ranked), and 277 full-time T/TT faculty. In the case of NTT faculty, the faculty senate was noted to not just accommodate but to be label-blind; in this context NTT are treated equally as T/TT members of the faculty. The 2011 review of the Faculty Senate commented on those NTT associated with the Missouri Institute of Mental Health. There were no issues of NTT representation in faculty Senate raised during this review. The questions of potential unhappiness of NTT faculty therefore may reside in other structures of the university. The issue of adjunct faculty is probably more complex; in regards to this review topic, no evidence was provided that part-time faculty have a voice in the faculty senate, as they are not 'eligible'. Therefore 10-16% of the headcount of the instructional staff could argue they lack a voice at the faculty senate.

Equality of units was raised in meetings in a minor way, as a positive, and all evidence indicates that a strength of the Faculty Senate is that the various parallel units are equal in voice and opportunities. Members of one unit noted that they are an equal member of Faculty Senate despite having an unusual faculty composition. The Bylaws & Rules Committee as well as Faculty Senate deserve praise for achieving such equality.

Representation of Staff and Students As members of the University Assembly, the students and staff who participated in meetings conveyed strong feelings of underrepresentation and being second class citizens. The Assembly is composed of 40 Faculty, 14 students, 5 senior administrators, and 3 staff as well as 11 nonvoting administrative members and the non-voting president of the SGA. Officially, students are 19% of the assembly and staff are 4%. If the assembly acts as the collected voice, then 77% of that voice is faculty (if one may consider administrators to qualify as faculty).

In addition to expressing feelings of underrepresentation, the students and to a lesser degree the staff said they felt excluded from decision making. For staff, this seemed largely to relate to their being a small fraction of the assembly. Students mentioned proportion but emphasized two other reasons for feeling side-lined. The first reason is that they are intimidated and unsure that they may speak or that they will be heard. The Assembly is an intimidating place for a newbie, let alone a newbie student. In contrast, the 2011 program review by KM Isaac noted "...student leaders have taken this opportunity very seriously and have used it to discuss topics of interests to them...". Given that no significant changes have occurred in the rules of the Assembly, it is likely that the opinions expressed by students during this review are strongly personality-dependent. The second reason given was the perception that business occurs in Faculty Senate rather than Assembly. On this point I received two perspectives: one was that Assembly is largely for dissemination of information and deliberation while decision-making occurs in Faculty Senate; the other was that Assembly considers issues relating to all, and Faculty Senate then meets and considers issues related only to faculty. I did not examine minutes to determine which of these

is the more accurate description, but I did hear from faculty that the Assembly was for dissemination of information.

If the Assembly is instead intended to represent the voice of the three major on-campus UMSL constituents, the current structure and operation of the Assembly does not create an environment conducive to inclusion of staff and students engagement. A structural change would require a bylaw amendment, which is not a trivial matter. However, a change to the operational rules of the Assembly and perhaps those of Faculty Senate could accommodate more participation by staff and students. At S&T, the presidents of student council, council of graduate students, and staff council are ex-officio members of the Faculty Senate and each is expected to report as part of the agenda. I cannot say that the staff or students feel equal at S&T, but my impression is that students feel they do have a voice in the decisions. S&T staff tend to avoid direct participation and potential conflict for the often-stated reason of being in potential career jeopardy.

Dissemination of Information At my university, it is common that faculty have no idea what transpires in Faculty Senate because their representatives do not communicate back to their units. The same appears true at UMSL. A suggestion that was volunteered during a meeting with UMSL faculty was to push department chairs to include FS reports as a standing agenda item for faculty meetings.

Conclusion

The UMSL Faculty Senate operates well and is respected by the administration. Assembly and Faculty Senate committees perform to expectations. Also, as expected, Faculty Senators may not pass along information from Assembly/Faculty Senate. There are always potential improvements in an organization; training for committee members and encouraging information flow by senators reporting in departmental meetings seem to be low-hanging fruit.

I would be delighted to elucidate further if there any questions about this review.



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