Ad Hoc Committee on A&S Shared Governance
Meeting Notes
January 20, 2017
Committee members present: Dixon Abreu, Elizabeth Baughan, John Gupton, Mari Lee Mifsud
Guests: Rafael de Sa (Chair of FRC), David Brandenberger (Chair of Gen. Ed. Comm.)

Questions that had been sent to guests ahead of the meeting:
- What would be the key components in an effective shared governance model for A&S?
- What obstacles get in the way?
- Are there shared governance models at other institutions, which you believe are effective and could be implemented at UR?

Rafael:

• The roles of ex officio members on committees need to be clearly defined. It can be stressful to have ex-officio members playing too heavy a role on committees; sometimes they don’t realize that ex-officio members do not have a vote, try to run the committee meetings, set up agendas, or hold back data needed for the functioning of the committee. Ex-officio members should not go beyond their boundaries, dictate policy, try to influence committee in particular ways on funding (even subconsciously). They do not have a vote, and are there to be used to link to different offices in case faculty need assistance.
• FRC is a faculty committee, however, it works closely with the Dean of A&S Office. In recent years FRC have started to submit a final annual report to the Dean.
• Funding for FRC is ok but FRC members have concerns:
  o With the huge number of hires in the next 3 years, FRC budget would be highly impacted from the beginning of the academic year. Summer fellowships are given as part of the start-up funding to new hires with funds allocated to FRC, this is a problem and new resources are needed. About 1/4 of a budget would disappear before applications are submitted in a given academic year. This is a shared governance issue. The FRC budget should only be allocated through the mechanisms of FRC. Start-up funds for summer fellowship should come from another pot of money.
  o The amount of summer fellowships should also be raised: 18 years ago was $6000, 25 years ago $5500, we need an increase.
  o FRC money is a hard line, which means the Dean will have to ask for an increase to the Provost of stipends for awards and for separating the start-up summer fellowships.

John: We need more clarity in how the dean’s budget comes from the provost. It would be good to know what the Dean requests of Provost, and what gets funded, every year. This may be clear to members of the P&P committee but it is not clear to other people, and it shouldn’t be a secret. An Exec. Comm. of the faculty should know all this.
David:

- Gen. Ed. Committee is an unusually weak committee: it does not have a mandate to change its curriculum, cannot rewrite FSHT or FSSA, etc. It is merely a gatekeeper, reviewing new course proposals on a case by case basis.
- Wellness curriculum is presently exempt from Gen. Ed. oversight and has operated without faculty oversight for about a decade. Senate recently gave motion on one time basis for Gen. Ed. Committee to vet a new Wellness course on sexual ethics, but that was an exception.
- Almost all of Gen. Ed. is taught in A&S, yet the committee is composed of faculty members from across the university. The committee is thus out of alignment with its stakeholders.
- Another weak part of the committee is its lack of supervisory power—the evaluations conducted of Gen. Ed. courses at present go into an OIE black hole—the committee is not involved in course evaluations or privy to results in any way
  - (John: OIE was created to serve the function of providing data for faculty committees and decision-making, but this is not functioning well or properly)
- A more powerful Gen. Ed. Committee is probably needed, lest the university have to rely on the Senate to initiate Gen. Ed. policy. Aside from policy changes, courses ought to be periodically reviewed and recertified, new stakeholders recruited, etc.
- Recommendation: strengthen the mandate of the committee, perhaps with a membership proportionate to where the courses are being taught.
- Strategic Plan went forward without consulting Gen. Ed. Committee and engaged in a preliminary reimagining of Gen. Ed. without commissioning any form of faculty-led study of the existing Gen. Ed. curriculum. Some committee members are uncomfortable about the Strategic Plan mandating changes in the Gen. Ed. curriculum without adequate preparation or study.
- In some undergraduate majors, Gen. Ed. now provides the majority of students’ experience in the liberal arts. If a typical A&S major requires 10-12 units (leaving students with the possibility of additional electives), some majors and concentrations in the B-School require 14-16 units (limiting students’ ability to take additional electives). Some faculty in A&S comment that once students apply to the B-School in their sophomore years, we often don’t ever see them again. The liberal arts, in this sense, risk becoming a token element of a B-School education, rather than a fundamental cornerstone of the school’s mission in line with that of the overall university community. Some in A&S are uncomfortable with this subordination of the liberal arts but feel powerless to influence the B-School’s gradual redefinition of the university’s liberal arts identity.

Rafael:

- Faculty should be involved in admissions selection. Strong suggestion for our committee: talk with Tina Cade re: admission in general and Oliver Hill scholarships, only a pool of 4-5 to pick from but have 14-15 scholarships to give. Admissions has no connection to faculty governance now at all, and it used to. We have a University Admissions
Committee, run by faculty, but it has no power any more. Why are we admitting so many students who say they want to join the B-School? Are we still a Liberal Arts school when 60% of students are Business majors? Could we talk with Admissions to put a cap on the number of B-School students admitted? Or could the B-school be more selective in accepting students once they are here?

• In the last 25 years, there has been an erosion of faculty voice and faculty interest, the collapse of committees into reporting mechanisms (or being reported to) rather than decision-making (like University Admissions Committee); as the number of administrative lines increases, faculty governance decreases.
• We could look at the way the library administration works (director + faculty committee) for a model of how faculty governance in A&S could work (dean + executive committee of the faculty)

Positive discussion of executive committee idea: this group could represent the voice of A&S in campus-wide debates, complementing the dean’s voice with faculty-wide perspective.

One bad model of faculty governance: Amherst. Absolute faculty governance can lead to gridlock.

Actions for ad hoc committee:
• Talk with Tina Cade about Admissions and Oliver Hill?
• Check out library structure to see if we might catch insights on how their executive committee works.
• Further define executive committee idea in order to present specific description of what the committee would do (committee by-laws) when we present the options to the faculty in February; look back at the models of faculty governance we studied and find the sections on executive/steering/governance committees, to use as models.