

Report of the Strategic Planning Working Group on Faculty in Governance

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Introduction

The role of faculty in governance issues is a critical factor in university planning. A strong, meaningful role for faculty in governance enhances recruiting and retention of quality instructors. A faculty with well defined and executed governance is attractive to new Ph.D.s as well as desirable for experienced faculty members. Faculty members actively engaged in governance are more likely to exhibit a higher level of commitment to the mission and goals of the university.

Method & Findings

The working group examined the *Xavier Faculty Handbook* to determine existing areas of responsibility for faculty. The handbook assigns “primary responsibility for achieving the educational goals and objectives of the University” to the General Faculty, defined as the combination of the Administrative Faculty, the Teaching Faculty, and the Library Faculty (Section III). More specifically, Section II-xi of the handbook states that the faculty¹ has “primary responsibility and authority [...] in academic policy matters under the governance system of the University” and “the primary responsibility for academic matters rests with the faculty.” In accordance with the corporate educational charter from the State of Louisiana, and the Constitution and By-Laws of the University Board of Trustees, the exercise of this responsibility is delegated to the University Academic Assembly. The open meeting afforded additional input to the working group.

According to the constitution of the University Academic Assembly (Appendix B of the Faculty Handbook), the faculty accepts primary responsibility for the following:

- curriculum,
- subject matter and methods of instruction research,
- faculty welfare,
- aspects of student life which relate directly to the educational process, and
- the granting of degrees.

Also, the faculty accepts co-responsibility for:

- long range planning,
- utilization of physical facilities,
- budgetary planning,

¹ Here understood as the Teaching Faculty, according to Section III: “When the word “faculty” is used without qualification, the Teaching Faculty is meant.”

- selection of primary administrative and academic officers,
- and the determination of faculty status

The committee found that, although the faculty areas of responsibility are clearly and explicitly listed, the structure for exercising these responsibilities are complex and often not well understood. This hampers faculty engagement in the university's defined governance process. In addition, the following specific issues were identified by the working group:

1. The *Faculty Handbook* does not define any role for faculty in determining the academic structure and restructuring of the university.
2. Although the handbook has a very clear and precise protocol for hiring faculty, the mechanism by which faculty exercise their co-responsibility in filling academic administrative vacancies is not specified.
3. The description and role of the Faculty Association and its relationship to other university governance bodies (Appendices C & D) is confusing/perplexing to many faculty.
4. Faculty workload renders faculty less than optimally effective in fulfilling service roles described in the handbook.

Overall, the committee found that the governance structure of the university is more complex than necessary. As a result, the mechanisms by which faculty members exercise their responsibilities are not employed to their maximum benefit.

Recommendations

The findings of the working group suggest a need for a simpler, clearer governance structure with more streamlined mechanisms for exercising faculty responsibilities. This structure would better enable more faculty members to participate in university governance and contribute to the development of a committed, engaged faculty. The working group recommends that a role be defined for faculty in the structuring and/or restructuring of academic units of the university and that an explicit mechanism be defined by which the faculty may exercise its co-responsibility in filling academic administrative vacancies.

The working group recommends the creation of a task force charged to (1) conduct a comparative study of Xavier's governance structure with that of other institutions, and (2) identify simplifications and improvements to Xavier's current governance structure. The working group suggests the following two-year timetable for this task force:

Goal: Clarify the protocol for faculty involvement in University governance

Objective	Timeline	Metric
I. Establish a task force to conduct a comparative study of Xavier's governance structure with that of other HBCUs and other comparable institutions	Fall 2008	Minutes and procedures of the task force
II. Review the existing policies in the <i>Faculty Handbook</i> and recommend a simplified and clarified structure allowing for greater faculty participation in governance matters.	Spring 2009	Recommended policy
III. Provide the mechanism for faculty input of the draft policy, i.e. forums, blogs, etc.	Fall 2009	Transcription of faculty input
IV. Present the final draft to the University Academic Assembly	Spring 2009	Minutes of the proceedings
V. Incorporate the new structure into the <i>Faculty Handbook</i>	Spring 2009	<i>Faculty Handbook</i>

The working group believes that adoption of these recommendations would enhance the role of faculty in governance, contributing to Xavier's ability to recruit, retain, and develop a dedicated faculty committed to preparing liberally educated leaders for the building of a more just and humane society.