

Ad-Hoc Committee on Definitions of Faculty, Program, and Department in the Faculty Constitution

May 2, 2021

BRIEF REPORT ON COMMITTEE FINDINGS

Committee Members; Birol Yesilada (Chair, CUPA), Mark Berrettini (Film-COTA), Kimberly Pendell (Library), Harry York (Honors College), Rachael Godlove (Public Health), and Andres Holz (CLAS) with support members: David Weber (Philosophy), Hunter Shobe (Geography), Vicki Reitenauer (WGSS), Tim Anderson (MCECS), Carolina Montoya-Gomes (WLL), Brenda Glascott (Honors), Brian Sandlin (Accreditation and Compliance), and Barbara Heilmair (Assoc. Dean COTA).

Committee members researched how 12 other comparable institutions of higher education addressed the definition of faculty, representation in the faculty senate, and organization of departments, programs, and colleges. We found that the definition of faculty is available on official documents such as faculty bylaws and senate bylaws. It is much more difficult to obtain information on how universities define programs and departments. We believe that the terms are used in a traditional disciplinary sense and that programs cut across departments.

We discussed the representation issue as being key for faculty governance at PSU. This is the Key Challenge for us. Whereas faculty representation is clear, although not when it comes to the Honors College, the question of academic professionals puzzles us. The Honors College is not designated as a college but as an “Other Academic Unit.” 2012 it became a College but the Senate has not caught up with it yet. Moreover, University Studies only has NTTF members whereas the Honors College has Tenure-track and NTTF members and has a Dean.

Furthermore, APs are not voting members in their respective Departments but are represented in the Senate. There is some inconsistency here. We also discussed how Academic Professionals get assigned as such across colleges and their representation in the Senate. Who makes those designations? Provost, the Deans? For a list of APs, HR has those descriptions and the names. Someone at the Dean’s office in each College should keep track of this for the purpose of individuals’ inclusion in Senate elections.

Another issue that came up pertains to how PSU defines schools. There are a variety of different ways PSU structures colleges? How do we account for the varying organizational structures?

- We use “unit” as a generic name and this has been a historical practice because there is inconsistency in referring to programs and departments.
- Are there differences in the program versus department? Shelly Chabon told us that she contacted lots of places for clarification: HR, HECC, Faculty Senate. She could not find a firm definition. The perception of each of these is different, however. The Conflict Resolution Program wanted to become a department. She found very little to

guide for the change. Other programs in the past moved on to becoming departments (i.e, Engineering and Technology Management and International Studies).

- The perception is that programs are less “secure” than departments although there is no real basis for this. Historically, programs have been eliminated by the university and this might be adding to some anxiety during this time of financial concern at PSU. However, the current constitution does not distinguish between departments and programs with regard to program elimination.
- We see these definitional inconsistencies at PSU to be a major challenge and problematic issue. Over the years, the patched-together nature of PSU has resulted in a confusing description of how units get decided to be schools or colleges.
- There are inconsistencies in how we define Schools across PSU. Social Work and Business Administration are schools with their respective Deans. However, The Hatfield School of Government and the Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning are within the College of Urban and Public Affairs and are led by Directors. Furthermore, the Toulan School has no departments whereas the Hatfield School has three departments with respective department chairs.

Next steps

We will be surveying administrators of programs, departments, schools, colleges, faculty, and staff during Fall 2021 to assess their perceptions and understandings of the above issues.

Final recommendations to the Senate by November 2021 for inclusion in the December Senate meeting.