

Senate Affairs Committee Report

April 2016

Chair: C. Buddy Creech, MD, MPH

Executive Summary

This year, the Senate Affairs Committee (SAC) has accomplished each of the 6 charges that were placed before the committee at the beginning of the academic year. Front and foremost have been the impact of the VU-VUMC split on the future of the senate and ways in which the efficiency and effectiveness of the Senate can be improved. Specific highlights from the year are provided in the sections that follow.

Reapportionment

Article II of the Faculty Senate Constitution states:

The Senate shall at least once every five years review the numbers of elected representatives from the several Faculties, taking into account the relative sizes of the Faculties and of the student bodies of the several schools. Each school shall have at least two Faculty Senators. The number of elected representatives of any one school or college shall be no more than one-third of the total number of elected senators. Changes may also be proposed to the Senate by any Faculty. Proposed changes in the composition of the Senate shall be made known to the members of the Faculty Assembly at least one month before Senate action, and shall become effective when adopted by the majority of the Senate voting membership.

The SAC determined that we would use the same formula that was used for the last 2 reapportionments. The formula is weighted based on the number of faculty, the number of students, and Senate rules that no school may have less than 2 or more than 20 (1/3 total) senators. There was considerable discussion about the formula and whether the VU-VUMC split affects how the Senate should be comprised moving forward. The SAC recommended that we move forward with the current reapportionment, using the currently approved formula; this resulted in a gain of one senator for the School of Engineering and a concomitant reduction of one senator in the School of Arts and Science.

Recommended Actions

The SAC recommends further that next year's SAC take up the issue of reapportionment formulas, and would suggest the following general approach:

1. Poll peer institutions for composition and apportionment of Faculty Senators
2. Evaluate whether the current maximum of 20 senators per school (1/3 of the Senate) is disproportionate or unwise
3. Evaluate whether the current minimum of 2 senators per school is disproportionate or unwise

The SAC also recommends that the Senate be mindful that any formula that considers some faculty more 'heavily weighted' than others may be a less than optimal starting point, particularly in light of the VU-VUMC split.

Amendments

Article III of the Faculty Senate Constitution states:

Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by the Faculty Senate or by any one of the Faculties of the several Schools or Colleges. Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution, amendments shall become effective when approved by two-thirds of those present and voting at a meeting of the Faculty Assembly. At least one month before

such meeting, the members of the Faculty Assembly shall be notified in writing of the proposed amendments.

The SAC recommended edits, as appropriate to the Faculty Constitution, which were approved by the Senate, approved by the Faculties, and ratified by the Faculty Senate.

Recommended Actions

No further action is required

Future of the Senate

In light of the reorganization of VU, the SAC considered whether separate VU and VUMC faculty senates should be created. After committee deliberation and conversations with key stakeholders, including the Chancellor and the Dean of the School of Medicine, it was unanimously recommended by the SAC that the institution maintain a single Faculty Senate that will represent the interests of all VU faculty, regardless of school appointment.

Recommended Actions

No further action is required

Senator Identification

Over the academic year, the senate minutes have slowly begun to identify senators by name during question/answer periods or other times of discussion. In 2013-14, however, the senate unanimously voted to not refer to senators by name in the published minutes.

Therefore, seeing no benefit to recording the names of senators during discussion or question/answer periods, the SAC unanimously recommended that we continue to follow the previous 2013-14 action to avoid identification of senators by name in the published minutes.

Recommended Actions

No further action is required

CARE Committee

The faculty senate continues to support the CARE committee and its work, particularly the planning of the annual event.

Recommended Actions

Next year's committee shall appoint one representative to the CARE committee to aid in collaboration and ongoing engagement.

University Standing Committee (USC) Engagement

Each year, the SAC receives reports from each of the standing committees, which include Athletics, Benefits, Calendar, Traffic and Parking, Religious Affairs, and Technology Review. The goal of this meeting is to ensure collaboration across the various committees of the University and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Recommended Actions

Continue to meet at least yearly with the chairs of the USC.