

Fall 2010

Faculty Senate Newsletter

Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

The Preamble to the [Academic Articles](#) paints an attractive picture of Notre Dame as an academic community in which communication, interdependence, cooperation, and shared responsibility for the well-being of the University are the chief characteristics. In my view, all of us who are bound by the Academic Articles should read particular sections of them in light of the sketch of the Notre Dame community with which they begin. In particular, when we read Article IV, on the organization of the faculty, we should understand the relationship between the Academic Council and the Faculty Senate as one that, as far as is possible, is characterized by the communication, interdependence, and cooperation that the Preamble attributes to the University as a whole. The practical question, then, is what can the Council and the Senate do to create a relationship of that sort?

Two models of Council/Senate interaction come to mind as how, in practice, that relationship might be realized. For reasons that will soon become obvious, I will call one of those models “simultaneous” and the other “successive”. In what follows, I will sketch both of those models as they have functioned this past semester.

Under the simultaneous model, the appropriate committee of the Council and the appropriate committee of the Senate address the same agenda item at roughly the same time. That has happened this semester in the way that the Council and the Senate addressed the formidable task of developing a University policy regarding post docs. In that case, the Advance Studies Committee of the Academic Council and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate collaborated all semester on fine tuning a draft document on that topic, with the Senate committee routinely proposing changes to the document and with the Council committee almost always accepting those changes as improvements to it. The result, I am confident, is that early in the spring semester, the Advance Studies Committee, with the support of the Senate, will present its finished product to the Council for its approval.

Under the successive model, the appropriate committee of either the Council or of the Senate decides to address an agenda item on its own, without, that is, the collaboration of the correlative committee of the other body. Only when the committee that has decided to go it alone has finished its work on the item in question does it share its finished (or, perhaps, penultimate) product with the correlative committee of the other body, asking for its feedback on that product. That has happened this semester in the way that the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Academic Council has addressed two formidable tasks, the identity of which is still under embargo. These tasks relate to matters of considerable interest to the faculty, and the product of the Faculty Affairs Committee’s efforts may generate substantial debate both in the Senate and in the faculty units that the different Senators represent.

Message from the Chair, continued

As a member of the Council's Faculty Affairs Committee, I can attest to the intelligence, imagination, and willingness to negotiate in good faith that has gone into the work of that committee this past semester. Still, I feel obliged to express my misgivings about the likelihood of the successive model's generating the level of communication, interdependence, and cooperation that the Preamble to the Academic Articles envisions. Where, in the future, the successive model does recommend itself to a committee of either the Council or the Senate, I hope that it will be blended with crucial components of the simultaneous model so that draft proposals that the first committee produces are shared with the correlative committee of the other body as early in the first committee's deliberative processes as possible. When the two committees are both working on a proposal that is still a work in progress, there is less of a chance that the second committee will perceive itself as having been presented with a take-it-or-leave-it proposition than when the second committee sees for the first time what is, in fact, the finished product of the first committee.

With regard to the two proposals that the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Academic Council has worked on so diligently this semester under as pure a successive model as could be imagined, it is of the utmost importance that the Administrative Affairs Committee of the Senate be given the time that it needs to analyze both of the proposals that will be released for comment early next semester, and that the whole Senate have the time that it needs to respond to whatever its Administrative Affairs Committee recommends **before** those proposals come up for a vote in the Academic Council. A foreshortening of the deliberative time given to the Senate would seriously undercut the possibility of our achieving that sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the University to which the Academic Articles have committed us all.

None of the preceding is meant to suggest that this past semester has not been a productive one for the Faculty Senate. In the four reports that follow, the committee chairs report on the recent accomplishments of their committees. I hope that their reports convey a sense of the variety of issues that the Senate has been addressing this semester.

John Robinson
Chair

News from the Student Affairs Committee

John Gaski, Chair

The Student Affairs Committee focused its Fall 2010 semester on deliberating a particular draft resolution. In its final meeting of the semester, on December 7, the Committee approved the resolution to be submitted for consideration by the full Senate. The subject matter of the resolution is the University Task Force on Supporting the Choice for Life.

Also at the December meeting, the Student Affairs Committee resumed its consideration of the student classroom department issue.

News from the Administrative Affairs Committee

Seth Brown, Chair

The Administrative Affairs Committee considered three issues this fall. First, in the context of the delayed announcement of the Fall 2011 home football schedule, we reminded the administration of the difficulties this causes in the planning of academic conferences at Notre Dame (see our 2009 resolution, *Resolution Regarding Academic Consequences of Delayed Notice of Home Football Scheduling*). I am pleased to report that both the 2011 and 2012 schedules have now been announced, and we have every hope that future schedules will continue to be disclosed in a timely manner.

Second, we considered one side effect of the dissolution of the department of Economics and Policy Studies this past spring, namely the fact that a handful of tenured faculty from that department ended up retaining their tenure in the College of Arts and Letters, but as members of no particular department. This meant that they would have been the only regular faculty to have no vote for a representative in the Faculty Senate. To remedy this, the committee proposed that an at-large seat, elected by and from the College of Arts and Letters as a whole, be added to the Senate. (Such seats have existed in Science, Engineering, and the Mendoza College of Business, but had not previously been allotted to the College of Arts and Letters.) Given the size of Arts and Letters, this addition does not in fact result in a disproportionate representation of this college. This change in the Senate bylaws was passed by the full Senate (see *Amendment to the Senate Bylaws and Proposed Amendment to the Academic Articles regarding At-Large Representation for the College of Arts and Letters*) and a correlative change in the Academic Articles is being forwarded to the Academic Council for consideration. Should that change be approved by the Academic Council, the President, and the Trustees, the change would go into effect starting in the 2011-2012 academic year (the election would be held in Spring 2011).

Finally, we considered whether the University should sponsor a shuttle bus service between Chicago and Notre Dame to aid faculty who live in the Chicago area in commuting to the University. In addition to this being a boon to current faculty in this situation, such a shuttle bus might be helpful in attracting future faculty who are obliged (typically for reasons of spousal employment) to live in Chicago. The committee felt strongly that such a service should not be subsidized by the University, as that would give a benefit to a small subset of faculty that was not generally available to all. Given the practical difficulties of the variability of faculty schedules, the limited number of faculty currently living in greater Chicago (about three dozen), and the problems of finding a single collection point that would serve everyone well, it was felt that it would be very difficult to maintain a self-supporting shuttle service at this time. It was therefore decided to not pursue the issue further.

News from the Benefits Committee

Nasir Ghiaseddin, Chair

The Faculty Senate Benefits Committee has been meeting with HR representatives on a monthly basis to discuss and provide input on issues affecting the faculty. These meetings were generally very useful in bringing the faculty perspective to their attention and in affecting the policies regarding faculty benefits. They have also provided a mechanism for resolving issues faced by the faculty in their dealings with Meritain Health and other health care issues. Our meetings with HR will continue throughout the year, and we will be monitoring the developments in healthcare and how it affects us at Notre Dame. The major changes to the faculty health care for 2011 are reported below:

- For many years the Benefits Committee has been advocating HR to negotiate a plan under which faculty could pick either of the two major hospitals as their designated hospital under their PPO plan. This goal has been achieved now and members can pick either Memorial or Saint Joseph as their hospital of choice for 2011 under the PPO plan.
- For 2011, the network for the PPO plan has changed from **Beech Street** to **PHCS Network**. **PHCS** is a larger network. Most of the main providers that were available in Beech Street, are also available in PHCS. If, however, a member or his/her dependents are away, and need to avail themselves of their PPO plan, they must make sure the provider in question is in the PHCS Network.
- Children are covered until the age of 26 even if they are not dependents and are not students. Currently, they are covered until the age of 25 and must be dependents and students.
- The limitation of lifetime coverage is removed and will be unlimited. Currently it is at 2 million dollars.
- Dollar limits on essential medical equipment is also removed.

In addition to Health Benefits, the following other major issues have been in our agenda:

Handicapped Parking Space: Some studies by the faculty and students have indicated that there is a lack of sufficient handicapped parking space, especially with respect to the placement of some parking spaces that are not close enough to relevant buildings on campus. We will be discussing this issue with University administrators.

Orientation for Off-Cycle Hires: The Committee learned that off-cycle hires are not receiving appropriate orientation in terms of benefits from the University. According to HR, off-cycle hires are handled by the Provost's office for faculty and the Graduate School for post docs. As a result, HR receives information about these hires much later than would be ideal. However, a project team is working to make the process more transparent so HR can receive the information earlier and reach out to those employees. It should also be mentioned to the departments that HR conducts orientations twice a month. New employees should be directed to those meetings to learn about benefits-related issues.

Faculty Salaries: We have been in discussion with the Provost's office about faculty salaries. Our benchmarking indicates that Faculty Salaries at Notre Dame in each rank and overall are somewhat below the salaries of our peer universities. In our discussion with the Office of the Provost, it was agreed that over time, faculty salaries at Notre Dame need to be raised to a level consistent with the median of AAU salaries for each rank. We will continue to meet with the Office of the Provost and monitor the progress toward this goal.

News from the Academic Affairs Committee

Judy Fox, Chair

This semester, the Academic Affairs committee primarily focused on determining if there is a need for longer exam periods. A survey was created and circulated to all faculty. According to the responses received, it appears that faculty want more flexibility with regards to the length, and even the necessity, of final exams. Our survey revealed that the percentage of the faculty that would like to be free to administer final exams that run for more than two hours is relatively small—about 10%, in fact. But because the 10% of the faculty who expressed interest in longer final exam are motivated by pedagogical concerns, the committee will meet with the Registrar early next year to see if this interest can be accommodated. The results of the survey can be viewed on the Faculty Senate website (see [*Final Exam Survey*](#)).

On other issues covered by the Academic Affairs committee, the Faculty Senate was asked to advise on a proposal regarding the creation of a Master's of Science in Global Health (MSc GH) Program. The Committee agreed that it was in no position to make comments either for or against the proposal because adequate time to study and deliberate upon the proposal had not been provided. Also, the Academic Council has been working on a proposal to define the category of "post doc". As Human Resources currently does not recognize that particular category of employment, the benefits and expectations tied to this position are not universal because they are not clearly defined. The Academic Affairs committee has been asked to weigh in on this issue and we hope that the drafted proposal will come before the Academic Council in February or March, 2011.



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The Faculty Senate is conceived as an assembly through which the faculty can exercise a collective and independent voice in the governance of the University. In forming its recommendations, the Senate pledges itself to the principle of reaching conclusions based on research and free and open discussion. In the submission of its recommendations to a University officer or to the Academic Council or other group, the Senate invites further study and discussion with that person or group whenever disagreement occurs. So informed with the spirit of independent and cooperative effort, the Faculty Senate hereby commits itself to the service of the faculty, and thereby to the service of the University.