

Brown University

The Task Force on Faculty Governance

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April 29, 2002

There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful of success, than to step up as a leader in the introduction of change. For he who innovates will have his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm support in those who might be better off under the new.
- Niccolo Machiavelli, **The Prince**

Introduction

With the encouragement of our new President, Ruth Simmons, the Faculty Executive Committee has created the Task Force on Faculty Governance as an ad hoc committee reporting to the FEC. Its charge is given below.

CHARGE: The Task Force will examine the role of the Brown University Faculty in self-governance as well as in setting the academic priorities of the University. Faculty self-governance includes but is not limited to faculty appointments, promotions, tenure, creation and abolition of academic units, evaluation of faculty merit and salaries, and academic budgets.

The Task Force will recommend changes, as necessary, in administrative procedures and the Faculty Rules and Regulations designed to provide the Faculty with a role in the governance of Brown University that reflects good management principles and the central importance of the Faculty to the long-term welfare of Brown University. The Task Force is advised to consult with the Administration to insure that its recommendations are consistent, to the extent possible, with the responsibility of the Faculty and the Administration for shared governance of Brown.

The committee is to make a preliminary report to the Faculty no later than October 2002 and a final report no later than April 2003.

To help the task force in its work, I have assembled reading material. The section on **Brown Governance** contains a memo by Russell Carey prepared for the President reflecting the long and frustrating history of faculty governance at Brown. It also contains the charge to the Academic Council and the Academic Priorities Subcommittee, a description of all Brown faculty committees as well as a list of the number of positions on these committees for administrators, faculty and students. The total number of faculty positions on university-level faculty committees is 237, an astonishingly high number. Finally, it has a list of members of key committees since about 1990. We may wish to consult these individuals about the changes we will propose.

The FEC has had a number of conversations about faculty governance since the fall. However, the most substantive discussions have been held since January. These are found in the section **FEC Minutes**, which contains the minutes of meetings since January 22; sections containing summaries of discussions on governance are highlighted.

The **Readings on Governance** section has readings supplied by members of the Faculty. Chapter 12 of the article *In Defense of American Higher Education* by Altbach et al. provides a history and an analysis of university governance. Chapter 11 of *A University for the 21st Century* by James Duderstadt is a frank assessment of university governance in

a changing world. The introduction and the section on Faculty Governance that starts on page 246 are particularly interesting. (Bill Simmons provided these two sources.) In *Strategic Governance*, Schuster et al. report on their study of “joint big decision committees” (such as our ACUP) that were introduced into higher education in the 1970s and 1980s as a means to broaden community involvement in strategic planning. (This source was identified by Newell Stultz.) I’ve also enclosed a report I gave at the February 5 Faculty meeting, the FEC’s comments of January 7, 2002 on the President’s Initiative for Academic Enrichment, and my notes on the Berkeley “Budget Committee” and key Princeton committees obtained in conversation with individuals deeply knowledgeable about their operations and effectiveness.

The section entitled **Faculty Comments** contains opinions on governance provided by members of the Brown Faculty. Some of these are substantial; others are short email messages.

The section **Faculty Handbooks** contains formal descriptions of faculty governance obtained from about a dozen universities. At <http://facgov.brown.edu/governance.resources.html> you can find the full set of documents from which these excerpts were drawn.

Governance Principles

The following are principles that I propose we use to guide our work. Some of them reflect opinions voiced at FEC meetings.

- a. Governance structures should meet explicit needs. Identification of these needs should be an essential first step in our study.
- b. Committees should be designed to be effective. Authority commensurate with responsibility should be vested in these committees. Their membership should be chosen so as to make them effective.
- c. The different styles of governance employed by administrators, faculty, students and staff must be acknowledged and taken into account when devising governance structures. Mediating among these styles may present the greatest challenge to effective governance.
- d. In the interest of increasing their impact, the number of committees should be reduced through consolidation, elimination, and reclassification. However, we also need to assess the impact of reducing the number of faculty serving on faculty committees.

The task before us is more difficult than it might appear. We have to contend with essential differences between faculty and administrators admirably summed up by James Dudderstadt (*A University for the 21st Century*, pp. 247-8)

"... there is an even more important characteristic that prevents true faculty governance at the institution level. Authority is always accompanied by responsibility and accountability. ... the faculty, through important academic traditions such as academic freedom and tenure, are largely insulated from the consequences of their debates and recommendations. It would be difficult if not impossible, either legally or operationally, to ascribe to faculty bodies the necessary level of accountability that would have to accompany executive authority."

Thank for volunteering for this important task. Our reward for our service on this committee will be a governance structure that will serve the long-term interests of the University.

John E. Savage