

May 1, 2008

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SHARED GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The official website of the University of California contains the following statement, which is signed by the UC President, The Regents, and the UC Academic Senate:

“For more than a century, shared governance between the Board of Regents, the systemwide president and the faculty has ensured the highest standards of excellence in fulfilling the University of California’s mission of teaching, research and public service... The Academic Senate is the representative body of the University faculty.”

To fulfill our mission in teaching, research, and public service, it is essential that the principles and practices of shared governance among the university, the campus administration, and the Academic Senate (and its councils and committees) be maintained. These practices include, but are not restricted to, such matters as undergraduate and graduate courses, curricula, degrees, admissions, and requirements for Academic Senate consultation in budgeting and in faculty appointment and advancement.

Recent experiences, however, indicate that at UC Irvine some of the practices of shared governance have become compromised. In particular, this is the case regarding the search processes and performance reviews of higher administrators such as deans of schools, campus-wide deans, and Vice Chancellors. While the final decision in selecting a dean resides with the Chancellor and EVC&P, we assert that recruitment of excellent candidates, and appropriate selection among them, requires the informed, engaged, and meaningful participation of the faculty. A simultaneous development reveals a decline in faculty involvement in Academic Senate matters. This decline may be partly explained by the fact that many new faculty members are unfamiliar with the principles, practices and opportunities of shared governance.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Governance was convened to provide recommendations for improving shared governance and transparency of process within UC Irvine. The Assembly of the Divisional Senate at UC Irvine therefore charged the Ad Hoc Committee to examine all aspects of shared governance on campus, with particular attention at this time to the process by which deans are appointed and reviewed. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Governance have interpreted our charge so as to focus on academic deans, thereby eliminating from consideration, for example, the Dean of Continuing Education and the Dean of Students.

To address this charge, the committee met on nine separate occasions (including once with Chancellor Drake and once with Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost Gottfredson), beginning in early January and concluding in late April. It also solicited opinions and analyses from UCI faculty members, from all of the academic deans, from a number of individuals who have recently served as deans, as well as from Academic Senate divisional chairs and faculty from other UC campuses.

The information derived from these sources only serves to confirm our initial belief that improvements are needed at UC Irvine in both the search and the review processes for academic deans. Our report contains a discussion of the problems we believe exist as well as specific recommendations in regard to improvements.

Issues and Problems

The selection of a new dean for an academic unit requires a process that assures the best possible pool of candidates for the position, an informed and broadly-based assessment of the final candidates, and a capacity to persuade the individual deemed best suited for appointment to accept the position. Faculty confidence in the process is essential, if the newly appointed dean is to move quickly and successfully into the responsibilities of academic and administrative leadership. Similarly, the mandated fifth year review of deans requires a process that combines understanding of a dean's multiple responsibilities and activities with assessment by individuals who are highly familiar with the particular dean's performance. All faculty members in the academic unit, together with other constituents, should know that their voices will be heard, their concerns evaluated fairly, and their comments allowed to contribute to actions leading to reappointment, conditional or time-limited reappointment, or non-reappointment. Restriction of opportunities for the full faculty of a School to participate in the activities of dean searches and dean reviews deprives the campus of potentially valuable input and has a negative impact on faculty morale.

The faculty and administration both have vital functions in the operation of a School, and have unique and shared goals and perspectives. Arguably, the stakeholders (i.e., campus administrators, School administrators, faculty) currently involved in the selection and review of deans agree about these principles of shared governance. However, there is far less agreement about whether current practices have consistently and successfully assured that all School faculty have the opportunity to express opinions and have them taken seriously in the decision-making process. A segment of the faculty at UCI is convinced that current practices do not assure that faculty are able to exercise their rights of shared governance in the dean searches and dean reviews.

In the recruitment of deans there are numerous, specific concerns. These concerns center upon (a) the selection and composition of search committees; (b) minimizing conflict of interest in the selection of committee chairs; (c) the level of confidentiality currently observed in some dean searches and the possible costs and benefits of such confidentiality; (d) the opportunity of faculty members who are not on the search committee to contribute to the search process at both early and advanced stages; and (e) the access of faculty to the dean candidates, particularly in the final stages of their recruitment.

The issue of confidentiality is complex, and opinions differ. On the one hand, there are proponents of maintaining confidentiality throughout the entire process of recruiting an external dean, until its conclusion and the Chancellor's announcement of his choice of dean. Underlying this position is the belief that such a high level of confidentiality is warranted to attract exceptionally well-qualified candidates, who may not wish their candidacy to be known at their own institutions. This seems to be an increasingly common practice and one not limited to professional schools. But there appears to be little empirical data beyond anecdote on how often this strategy leads to the desired outcome and, if it does, at what cost, such as to faculty morale. In any case, maintaining confidentiality throughout the entire search process is an unrealistic goal, particularly once campus visits by the candidates are underway.

On the other hand, there are proponents of openness throughout the search process, including the initial solicitations and receipt of applications. They claim that the full faculty, and not just a limited number, should have the opportunity to meet with the finalists for the position of dean. In the view of these individuals, a full flow of information and opinions from School faculty to the finalists, and the opportunity of the candidates to respond to and initiate discussion, should result in a better outcome.

Among other things, a more open process may allow dean candidates to consider whether they believe they can meet the challenges of the dean position.

A solution to these opposed positions recognizes some advantages of each approach. This is to have full transparency and faculty participation at two points of time in the dean search process. The first is at the very beginning when criteria for dean selection are identified and before specific applicants are even screened. The second is towards the end of the search process, when the pool of candidates has been reduced to a few finalists.

In the review of deans, there are concerns about how faculty input is solicited and evaluated, the role of CAP and other councils of the Academic Senate, confidentiality, the selection and composition of appropriate review committees, and potential problems, including conflict of interest in naming a review committee chair from among the other academic deans. While it is recognized that the review of deans is an administrative personnel action and as such requires a high level of confidentiality, arguably even higher than dean searches, there is concern that the input solicited should be broad and inclusive. Finally, there is a lingering apprehension that faculty efforts invested in a dean's review are without consequence, because, in the case of disagreement between faculty and the Chancellor/EVC&P about whether a dean's performance should lead to reappointment, it is most likely that the priorities of the central administration will be weighed more heavily than concerns about the dean's efforts raised by the faculty.

The following recommendations address the concerns we have identified in a way that strengthens the commitment of both the Academic Senate and the campus administration to the principles of shared governance and thus contributes to the continued vitality and growth of the Irvine campus.

Tim Bradley, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Jutta Heckhausen, Psychology & Social Behavior
Alan Barbour, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
Ellen Greenberger, Psychology & Social Behavior
Meredith Lee, German
Spence Olin, History
William Sirignano, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering

The Ad Hoc committee proposed a set of recommendations for the search and review of academic deans. These recommendations were discussed, some of them were amended, and all were voted on at the Divisional Senate Assembly on May 15, 2008. Please refer to the recommendations as approved by the Assembly on the Senate website:

<http://www.senate.uci.edu/images/assembly/enc1final.pdf>