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Who Can Vote in Elections?

Submitted by Dr. James Harris

4/26/2007

Question:

It is not clear who can vote in elections for university committee representatives. There is nothing concerning who can vote in these elections or how these elections are to be conducted stated in the Georgia Board of Regents Policy Manual, the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate, or the GSU statutes. I ask for clarification on this issue. Do college bylaws determine voting policy for these elections or is there an official document at the BOR or university level that takes precedence?

Rationale:

This issue is fundamental to faculty governance at GSU.

SEC Response:

BOR Policy Manual 302 and GSU Statutes I.3 define the "Faculty" as being comprised of the Corps of Instruction (what in everyday parlance we usually, and apparently incorrectly term "the faculty") and Administrators who hold academic rank. All members of the "Faculty" are eligible to vote in Faculty Senate elections. Adjunct faculty and faculty with honorary titles are not part of the "Faculty."

In email exchanges, Dr. Harris specifically asked about the eligibility to vote of temporary faculty. The BOR does not offer a definition of "adjunct."

The SEC consulted with President Grube on this matter, and in a letter (quoted here and below) of September 18, 2007, President Grube, who is charged with deciding questions of interpretation of the GSU Statutes, states that "All full-time temporary faculty are eligible to vote in Senatorial elections. Part-time or adjunct faculty members are not eligible to vote."

Dr. Harris specifically asks, however, about University, not Senate committees. In general, University committee elections are run in tandem with Senate elections, and the voter list is therefore the same for both. Hence, all members of the Faculty, including full-time temporary faculty, are eligible to vote in elections for University committees. That seems to cover the strict ground of Dr. Harris's query. However, the SEC also inquired regarding the connected issue of eligibility to run in these elections.

According to President Grube, temporary faculty members are not eligible to serve as Senators: “The University’s commitment to employ a temporary faculty member is one academic year in duration. . . . the University’s intention is that the faculty member’s employment will not continue. It is inconsistent with that intention for a temporary faculty member to undertake to serve a three year term on the Faculty Senate.”

The Statutes and Bylaws are less clear regarding temporary faculty members serving on Senate (or University) committees: “While it is generally permissible for temporary faculty to serve on committees, such service should not be inconsistent with the principle that a temporary appointment is not intended to exceed one academic year in duration.” Applying the logic that excludes temporary faculty members from serving as Senators seems to exclude them from serving as elected members of Senate or University committees. In short, they are not eligible to run for these positions.

In yet another related matter, the question of Administrators serving as Senators or as voting members of Senate committees arose. According to BOR policies and our own Statutes, Administrators with academic rank are so eligible. (As a point of interest, a motion to limit Administrator eligibility came to the Senate on 3-23-05 and was defeated; see the archived minutes of that meeting.) However, it has been an almost universally honored tradition at Georgia Southern for administrators – at least those with the words “dean” or “vice-president” or “provost” somewhere in their position titles – to decline these positions.

Attachment: [Dr. Grube's response to RFI](#)