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Faculty Welfare Committee Motion Regarding Periodic Review of Department Chairs

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Faculty Welfare Committee Motion
Regarding Periodic Review of Department Chairs
Submitted by Robert Costomiris
5/9/2012

Question:

In the interests of shared governance and to insure consistency across academic departments the Faculty Welfare Committee moves that the following policy be adopted by the Faculty Senate and placed in the Faculty Handbook under Section 105.03 “Evaluation of Administrators.”

The term of office for Department Chairs shall be five years. A Chair shall not be limited to a particular number of consecutive terms. In the fourth year of a Chair’s tenure and as soon as possible after the Chair’s fourth annual evaluation, the Dean of the Chair’s college shall conduct a thorough review of the Chair’s performance to determine whether the current chair should be recommended for renewal for a succeeding term. This review shall include:

1. a meeting between the Dean and the faculty of the department to discuss their concerns

2. a review by the department’s faculty of the faculty’s annual evaluations of the Chair and all other relevant evidence, including but not limited to: the Chair’s CV, the Chair’s term, and a summary of the Chair’s goals for the coming term
3. a vote by the voting members of the department to recommend or not to recommend that the current chair be renewed

Voting will be by secret ballot at the time of the meeting or electronically. Votes will be tabulated by two members of the department and the results presented to the Dean. After considering the vote of the faculty and following any additional consultation deemed appropriate, the Dean will either reappoint the Chair for another five-year term or begin the process for the selection of a new Chair. If the Dean decides to renew the term of the Chair despite a negative vote by the department's faculty, he/she will provide to the faculty in writing an explanation of his/her decision to continue the Chair's appointment.

Rationale:

The language in the 2011-12 Faculty Handbook Section 105.03 states: "In addition to annual performance appraisals, senior administrators (vice presidents, deans, directors, and department chairs) undergo in-depth performance review and evaluation every fourth year. In Academic Affairs, the survey portion of this process is carried out for deans, directors, and department chairs annually to provide information for continuous improvement. The review seeks input from subordinates and peers and focuses on the administrator’s management/organizational ability, leadership, and progress on the unit’s stated goals and objectives." This statement lacks any specific means by which a chair’s subordinates and/or peers (here meaning the department's faculty) might meaningfully evaluate the chair’s performance, leadership, and progress, thus hampering the ability of the department to "provide information for continuous improvement." The Faculty Welfare Committee believes that this motion addresses this lack in the current policy. While some colleges already might have a policy regarding the evaluation of department chairs, the Faculty Welfare Committee believes this university level model will provide a method all colleges and departments can profitably use.

SEC Response:

5/29/2012: The SEC voted unanimously to include this motion on the agenda of the June 6 meeting of the Faculty Senate.
Senate Response:


Original Motion: “In the interests of shared governance and to insure consistency across academic departments the Faculty Welfare Committee moves that the following policy be adopted by the Faculty Senate and placed in the Faculty Handbook under Section 105.03 ‘Evaluation of Administrators.’

The term of office for Department Chairs shall be five years. A Chair shall not be limited to a particular number of consecutive terms. In the fourth year of a Chair’s tenure and as soon as possible after the Chair’s fourth annual evaluation, the Dean of the Chair’s college shall conduct a thorough review of the Chair’s performance to determine whether the current chair should be recommended for renewal for a succeeding term. This review shall include:

1. a meeting between the Dean and the faculty of the department to discuss their concerns

2. a review by the department’s faculty of the faculty’s annual evaluations of the Chair and all other relevant evidence, including but not limited to: the Chair’s CV, the Chair’s annual reports to the Dean, a summary of the Chair’s accomplishments for the current term, and a summary of the Chair’s goals for the coming term

3. a vote by the voting members of the department to recommend or not to recommend that the current chair be renewed.

Voting will be by secret ballot at the time of the meeting or electronically. Votes will be tabulated by two members of the department and the results presented to the Dean. After considering the vote of the faculty and following any additional consultation deemed appropriate, the Dean will either reappoint the Chair for another five-year term or begin the process for the selection of a new Chair. If the Dean decides to renew the term of the Chair despite a negative vote by the department's faculty, he/she will provide to the faculty in writing an explanation of his/her decision to continue the Chair’s appointment."
Costomiris offered a friendly amendment that he had distributed to Senators: The amended sentence would become “votes will be tabulated by two members of the department and the results presented to the department and to the deans.” The amendment was Approved; the amended motion was Approved.

**President’s Response:**

6/29/2012: Following review of the recommendation adopted by the Faculty Senate at the June 6, 2012, Faculty Senate meeting, as provided in your memo of June 7, 2012, I am DEFERRING this motion to the Council of Deans (CoD) for discussion and recommendations and charge the Provost with responsibility to carry forward a recommendation to the Senate from the CoD. Because the Deans are charged with responsibility for appointing and overseeing the various department chairs, it seems appropriate that they be provided an opportunity to provide input into this motion before the President takes action.

The following update was provided on July 13, 2012 and articulated in the president’s remark at the September 19 senate meeting:

As you know, the June 6 Faculty Senate Welfare Committee passed two motions regarding review, evaluation and no confidence votes for Chairs. I initially indicated that I intended to defer these motions to the Council of Dean’s (CoD) for their input. Because the Faculty Senate rules require me to take action on such things within 30 days, this review by the CoD could not take place within this time frame, and I had no choice but to deny both motions. These motions have now been fully discussed by the CoD, and I am including Provost Bartel's overview of the discussion below. I agree with their assessment and therefore DISAPPROVE both of these motions passed by the Welfare Committee. However, having said that, Provost Bartels and I both agree that there is room for improvement in standardizing Chair review, and I therefore urge both the Council of Deans and the Faculty Senate to work together on proposing new language that might be more acceptable. I will ask Moderator Mynard and Provost Bartels to work together to determine that best way path forward related to this discussion.

The Council of Deans met on Wednesday, July 11th to discuss two motions approved by the Faculty Senate: Evaluation of Chairs; Votes of No Confidence in Chairs. Their recommendations were as follows:

The Deans noted that they do not have opposition to a formalized
process of evaluating Chairs on a periodic basis. It was noted, however, that annual reviews of Chairs already exists. In those reviews, all faculty have the opportunity to rate their Chair's performance against specific criteria and provide subjective information regarding the Chair's performance. In most colleges, Deans met with faculty every 4-5 years to discuss the Chair's performance. The proposal, as written, provides a degree on process that was judged to be beyond the scope of faculty responsibility. Suggestions for rewording of the policy, including an elimination of term years for Chairs were recommended. Deans agreed that moving to term limits for Chairs would make hiring and retaining Chairs difficult. The Deans would be willing to work on revisions to the policy if this would be agreeable to the Faculty Senate.