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What procedure(s) does the Faculty Development Committee follow in receiving and reviewing applications for professional travel funds? What procedure(s) does it follow to decide which applications receive/do not receive funding?

Submitted by Clara Krug

3/2/2006

Question:

What procedure(s) does the Faculty Development Committee follow in receiving and reviewing applications for professional travel funds?

What procedure(s) does it follow to decide which applications receive/do not receive funding?

Rationale:

Faculty in all units apply to the Faculty Development Committee to augment the limited funding available from their own departments for professional travel.

Response:

From the SEC 3/9/2006: All proposals are reviewed in a blind review process. No names are attached to the material the committee members receive. On the proposal application format page, each question is given a weight – a “perfect” proposal would receive a score of 26 points. There is also a rubric attached to the application information which is used by the committee members to award points for each question. After each member has had the opportunity to read the proposals, their individual

scores are averaged for each proposal across committee members who reviewed the proposal. I should note here that not all committee members score every proposal – in the last round, Reviewer #6 scored only 9 of 41 proposals, and reviewer #3 did not score 6. If a reviewer did not score a proposal, their missing score is ignored in computing the average.

The committee then meets to determine funding. In the last (January 2006) round of travel, the committee voted for full funding up to their budget cutoff point, which amounted to 52.5% of requested funds. But the committee did award some partial funding before in other grant competitions. In that case, the very high average scores got full funding, and the second tier got partial funding, up to the funds available. All decisions are made in the committee meetings by all members' vote.

The other two requests were both from Clara Krug. The first concerned the procedures the Faculty Development Committee uses to decide who is awarded money. I consulted with Bill Yang, the chair of the committee, in formulating a response. Basically, the method is that all proposals are scored in a blind process. Each portion of the proposal has a possible number of points attached to it which is listed on a proposal format page. There is also a rubric which is posted as well, as part of the application, and serves as a set of guidelines for the committee members in scoring the proposals. Once the proposals have all been scored independently, the committee then meets to review the top scoring ones and basically the top proposals are awarded funds until the available funds are exhausted. In this last January round, all funded proposals were given full funding. In the past, there have been some top proposals which received full funding and others in a second tier who received partial funding. A follow-up question asked if people could find out their scores as help in revising or making better submissions in the future. Bill Yang was going to consult with the committee about this, but he felt it really would not be beneficial as future competitions would involve different proposals, and even former members of the committee who thought they knew what it took to get funding had had non-winning proposals.

Clara Krug (CLASS): About my request for information, I just wonder how we could get additional information. The report provided by Professor Yang mentions, for example, that there is a “final round” at which scores are tallied, so I do not know how many so called rounds there are. Number two, the final sentence of his information report states “all decisions are made in the committee meetings by all members vote;” however, in the previous paragraph he states that in the last round, “reviewer number 6 scored only nine of 41 proposals and reviewer number 3 did not score six.”

Pat Humphrey (COST), Chair, Senate Executive Committee: I asked him about that,

and he said he did not know why reviewer number 3 did not score six.

Clara Krug (CLASS): No, that is not my question; if I might continue. "If a reviewer did not score a proposal, the missing score is ignored in computing the average." What I do not understand is how he could report that the committee decisions are made by "all members' vote" when in the previous paragraph, he has stated that reviewer number 6, in fact, reviewed only 22%. So, all members did not vote, apparently, and the committee member number 3, scored 85% of the proposals. And then my final question is the following, and it really connects somewhat to Olivia Edenfield's concerns. I do not know so much about exact numbers, but about comments on reviewers' proposals, I do not think that the committee can assume that an applicant will not submit again the same proposal. Just as those of us in the Humanities acquainted with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Georgia Humanities Council, are accustomed to receiving comments that will help resubmit as the Humanities Council calls this second application for the same proposal, so might people here resubmit. At the moment, the final sentence of a typical letter of rejection reads "and the committee looks forward to considering proposals from you in the future." So, I would imagine that a person would then want to know how his or her proposal might be improved, keeping the names of the reviewers anonymous, keeping the exact numbers anonymous, but letting people know how they might improve. Just as we tell our students, those of us who give multiple draft compositions, how they might improve before the final draft. So I do not see any of that information here. Do I need to submit another request for that information? I do not find this to be thorough. I apologize for bringing this up, but since we do have so little travel money now, and people would like to have additional money, and this is a source for the money, it would also be helpful if we knew how much total money there is for the academic year.

Bob Cook (CIT), Senate Parliamentarian: Basically, you can submit information requests, as I understand it, ad infinitum.

Clara Krug (CLASS): Okay

Bob Cook (CIT), Senate Parliamentarian: If they are different.

Clara Krug (CLASS): Okay

Bob Cook (CIT), Senate Parliamentarian: If it is the same information request, then presumably normally the answer would be the same. The other alternative would be to have a motion saying that it is the sense of the Senate that such and such should happen or that a committee should conduct its business in a particular way. And then another alternative would be to aspire to run that committee. I think those are all the

alternatives.

Richard Flynn (CLASS): It was my understanding that all of these funding committees are supposed to give some sort of feedback upon rejection of a proposal, and that this was settled some years ago.

Candy Schille (CLASS): If it is not in the Bylaws, it is not required. And if it is not in the Bylaws and we want it to be there, then we ought to ask for a revision of the Bylaws that these committees will provide feedback.

Bob Cook (CIT), Senate Parliamentarian: The other alternative is that the Senate can charge a committee to operate in a particular way as part of its charge. I do not know what the specific charge of this committee says, but that would be another avenue.

David Alley (CLASS): You may remember last year when I was chair of the Faculty Research Committee, such a charge was in fact made to us to have an appeal mechanism for any candidate whose proposal was not accepted at full funding. So the Senate did in fact instruct that committee to amend its procedures.