

# *Senate Connection*

A Faculty Senate Newsletter

**April 9, 2004**

## **• Rationale for Changes in the Senate Constitution**

### **Eric Jerde**

After ten years, the Faculty Senate has re-examined its constitution. The desire to examine the Constitution did not grow from any over-riding concern, but rather from some confusion during the August, 2003 election of the Executive Council concerning the actual method of election. The modifications made clarified the election process. In addition, other minor items have been changed as well to reflect changes in operational definitions at MSU. In 2002-2003, the vice-President for Academic Affairs became the Provost through a title change, and the employment categories in policies PG-1 and PG-3 were changed.

During discussions of these changes, several other items were considered that are of more functional importance. Some faculty felt that Senate membership was too heavily composed of non-tenured faculty, and it was proposed that some form of requirement be added to ensure some level of tenured representation. This was rather heavily debated, with many feeling that departments should have the full ability to choose their representatives, and others feeling that too often the untenured faculty are chosen by departments simply to give them service time, and that tenure should be a requirement for Senate membership. As a result, the compromise was passed requiring one senator from each department have tenure. In addition, the requirement of one year of MSU employment prior to Senate service was increased to two years. This was to provide more time for a faculty member to acquire experience in the basic processes at the University.

Other issues that were debated, but not passed, included term limits to Senate membership, and requiring that the Senate Chair be tenured. These were deemed by the majority as having too restrictive an effect, and counter to the idea of free choice.

## **• A Period of Transition for MSU--a Challenge for the Faculty Senate**

### **Tom Creahan, Chair, Faculty Senate**

Morehead State University is undergoing some major changes, and change brings challenges and opportunities. Since the current Faculty Senate constitution was adopted in 1993 there have been many changes at MSU:

- **The size and makeup of the university** The number of faculty and students have increased by nearly the same amount, leaving the student/faculty ratio about the same. Administrative & Professional Staff have increased by about half, and now outnumber the faculty.

MSU	1993	2003	% Change
<b>Students</b>	<b>8900</b>	<b>9500</b>	6.7%
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>363</b>	7.7%
% of Employees	35.9%	32.6%	
<i>Student/Faculty Ratio</i>	26	26	
<b>Administrative &amp; Professional</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>388</b>	50.4%
% of Employees	27.5%	34.8%	
Employees (FT)	938	1115	18.9%

- **Technology** This area of change is obvious--even the students will soon come equipped with computers right in the classroom!
- **Faculty responsibilities** Teaching loads haven't changed much, but service responsibilities seem to have kept pace with the number of administrators, and many faculty are more heavily involved in research than ever before.

**More changes are coming** Within the next two years:

- We will have a new president.
- 31.5% of MSU's Executive Leadership will be over 65 years old or will have 27 years toward retirement.
- Our own Faculty Senate Secretary, Judy Carpenter, will have been at MSU for 27 years, 20 years as Senate secretary.

The Faculty Senate faces a number of challenges and opportunities, now and in the coming year under the leadership of next year's chair, Terry Irons.

- We will represent the interests of the faculty in the presidential search, providing a forum for faculty input and communicating those interests to the search committee.
- We must work with new president to strengthen the faculty role in university governance.
- We should play an active and positive role in facilitating the change in administration.
- We can improve communications with faculty and others (Administrators, committees, the rest of the university, others outside the university)

- We will need to revise Senate operations. Judy Carpenter is the only secretary the Senate has had in 20 years, so when she chooses to retire it will be a challenge to replace her. It will also be an opportunity to examine the way the Senate conducts its business, handles its records, and communicates.
- The change in administration also provides an opportunity to reexamine the roles of committees on campus. The increased use of ad hoc committees suggests that the current lineup of standing committees may need revision.

## • **Employee Benefits Committee and Health Care Plan**

### **Tom Creahan**

The Faculty Senate voted unanimously at its March 18 meeting to reorganize the Employee Benefits Committee. The reorganization specifies that the chair of the committee be a faculty or staff member of the committee. The Director of Human Resources has chaired the committee. Staff Congress has also recommended this change. Roger Barker, the Director of Human Resources, supported the change, and believes it will give employees a greater sense of ownership of their benefits plans. Support for the committee will continue to be provided by Human Resources.

MSU employees are now several months into a new health care plan. By now everyone is familiar with the changes to the plan, but we are just beginning to understand how these changes will affect our financial situation, both as individuals and for the university as a whole. The changes were designed to give employees the incentive to take more control over their health care expenses in order to slow down the rate of increases in health care costs. As everyone is aware, health care expenditures have increased rapidly in recent years, and there has been a nationwide shift in the burden of these costs from employers to employees. Some change in the MSU plan was needed to keep the university's share of the costs of the plan from spiraling out of control. Preliminary results available to Human Resources indicate that the new plan is on target to achieve the desired results: slowing the growth of the university's share of the costs. The effect on individual employees is less certain.

The 2004 health care plan was designed by Human Resources, with a mandate from President Eaglin. Some details were adjusted in response to feedback from employees, but the major structure of the revision was determined by the administration. Employees were not broadly represented in the process at an early stage of the design, when policies and options were decided. Both the Faculty Senate and the Staff Congress passed resolutions opposing the plan. Significantly, the Employee Benefits Committee never voted on the plan. The committee, chaired by the Director of Human Resources, was not convened to discuss the plan until late in the process. The change in the committee is intended to give employees more control over the committee's meeting schedule and agenda. President Eaglin must approve the change before it goes into effect.

## • **Academic Policies Committee**

## **Edna Schack, Chair**

The Academic Policies Committee worked with the Distance Education Advisory Committee to strengthen and streamline the proposal process for courses and programs using various forms of distance learning. The goal was to make this process as simple as possible without sacrificing faculty input through the usual committee structure. Information on this process is available through the Distance Learning Office or the Graduate or Undergraduate Offices.

As has been the case for a number of years now, the Academic Policies Committee continues to discuss the issue of evaluating teaching. We have been discussing the issue of formative vs. summative evaluation and trying to reconcile this with the PBSI, tenure and promotion processes at MSU. While Faculty Evaluation Plans (FEPs) are beginning to value methods of teaching evaluation other than IDEA, the message that IDEA is the primary tool of evaluation continues to be sent. This is of particular concern to tenure track faculty and faculty who are contemplating the promotion process.

We plan to look at ways IDEA can be used more effectively to encourage improved teaching methods rather than simply placing a summative number on teaching effectiveness. And, we met with the Center for Teaching and Learning Director and Advisory Committee to discuss ideas the Center has for supporting faculty goals for improved teaching.

Our discussions with faculty and recent changes in FEPs seem to indicate much support for the concept of formative evaluation with the goal of improved teaching quality. This doesn't come as much of a surprise since we are all in the business of teaching students and our ultimate goal is improved student learning!

### **• Evaluation Committee**

## **Darrin Demoss, Chair**

The Senate Evaluation Committee, as well as the University Tenure and Promotion Committee's were given the charge of reviewing College or Departmental Faculty Evaluation Plans as received in the Fall of 2002. The Provost's initial goal was to have this process completed by April of 2003. This process has moved slowly in some colleges and departments and was extended to April 2004. As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 several FEP's have yet to be accepted by one or more of the committees. Thus, it would appear that this process, though completed for the majority of FEP's, will linger into the next academic year. Over the past year it became clear to the Evaluation Committee that the University documents referred to as the guidelines for both the Faculty Evaluation Plan and Performance Based Salary Increase Plan for Faculty needed revision. At this time, the committee is currently critiquing drafts for each of these documents and will be making recommendations for their approval.

### **• Governance Committee**

## **Ken Henderson, Chair**

Service to the University is a commitment embraced by most MSU faculty. Our faculty tirelessly and voluntarily serve on more than two dozen standing and advisory committees. The Governance Committee strives to ensure appointments that provide balanced representation among our four Colleges. However, in the process, membership quotas have denied some faculty in our two largest Colleges, S&T and Humanities, the opportunity to contribute to committee service. In an effort to create positions for faculty who want to serve on University standing and advisory committees, Faculty Senate recently reallocated the membership requirements for five Committees. Required representatives from each College has been reduced from two faculty members to one faculty member on the Academic Standards & Appeals, Faculty Rights & Responsibilities, Planning, and Research & Creative Productions Committees. Required membership on the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee has been reduced from four to two faculty members from each College. These changes create 24 new At-Large appointments and establish service opportunities for more MSU faculty dedicated to our academic community.

- **Professional Policies Committee**

**Eric Jerde, Chair**

The Professional Policies Committee has begun the process of examining the 97 professional policies (PG, PAd, PAc, PSE, PSNE) to correct errors that are present due to changes in organization within MSU (such as the Office of Personnel Services now being known as the Office of Human Resources, or the Provost's title change), and to re-align the policies so that they cross-reference correct policies. An example of this concerns references to the old employment definitions in PG-1 and PG-3. PG-3 was revised last year, and now encompasses that covered by both of the old policies. PG-1 has now been superseded, and as such, any reference to PG-1 in another policy is now incorrect.