

**Minutes of the Faculty Standards Committee, University Senate, 9/21/2015**  
[approved at the 10/12/2015 meeting]

In Attendance:

- Jc Beall, Chair, Philosophy
- Sandra Bellini, Nursing
- Pam Bramble, Fine Arts
- Jack Clausen, CAHNR
- Dipak Dey, CLAS
- Maria-Luz Fernandez, CAHNR
- Michael Fischl, Law
- Elizabeth Jockusch, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
- Del Siegle, Education
- Lisa Werkmeister-Rozas, Social Work
- Susanne Yelin, Physics
- Marcy Balunas, Pharmacy
- Preston Britner, Human Development & Family Studies
- Thulasi Kumar, OIRE
- Sally Reis, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (*Ex Officio* Member)

**Introductions of Committee Members**

**Agenda Item 1**

FSC was asked to consider the draft motion from the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to the University Senate on “Realignment of Dean’s Constituency Representation to University Senate.” (See Appendix 1 for full text of the motion.)

The Deans’ Council has already approved the changes. Although some FSC members interpreted this as an opportunity for increased faculty voice in the Senate, other members raised some concerns re. possibly limiting Senate involvement of Associate Deans, who can be very experienced. Further, a reduction could limit administrative opportunities for involvement and their representation in a University (not Faculty) Senate. Such engagement can be useful. Jc will convey concerns to SEC; FSC would like a response from the SEC re. the arguments for such a change.

**Agenda Item 2**

Suspension of Senate rule that SETs are to be calculated only in classes of more than 5 students. The SEC Chair writes: “Anne D’Allewa, Dean of Fine Arts, requested a suspension of the Senate rule that SETs can only be calculated in classes with enrollment greater than 5. The small classes in fine arts are not being evaluated and the faculty portfolios are suffering. Obviously there are major issues for faculty and students with the current system and equal or greater concerns if exceptions are

created. Nonetheless, she has requested a one year suspension so that all courses in SFA are evaluated this academic year. [The SEC Chair] told her that [the FSC] would discuss and share [its] conclusions by October 15.”

The FSC discussed options for getting formative evaluations through OIRE. Possibilities include giving feedback to faculty but not Department or Provost. The chief concern is confidentiality (for student(s) in very small classes or individualized classes, such that feedback could be tied to students). Possible solution: Pooled SETs for small n (e.g., lessons). Similar concerns exist in Nursing and other programs, so a University response is likely required. There was agreement.

Conclusion: For reasons of statistical validity and especially confidentiality, we cannot see a way to support the motion. We do recommend alternative means of assessment in smaller classes. See ITL options for formative assessments, available for use as formative or summative assessments.

Separate from the request: Jc suggested that Scholastic Standards consider the issue of confidentiality and student voice in classes of 5+ but with fewer than 5 completed surveys.

### **Agenda Item 3**

The FSC read and briefly discussed the request from the SEC to FSC to “take up the issue of how faculty may be encouraged to seek assistance in improving teaching when some set of indicators demonstrate clear problems in the classroom.” (See Appendix 2 for full text of the request.)

There was some discussion about the scope of major concerns related to problematic Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) scores. Sally Reis shared data on the very low frequency of ratings of 1 or 2 on the 5-point scale, and also the nature of other complaints related to some faculty and their teaching effectiveness.

Other discussion focused on the validity of SETs and how to interpret results.

As the members considered some of the SEC’s prompts, a few questions arose: What are the minimal standards for teaching effectiveness? How should teaching be measured? What options do the Department, School/College, and University have to promote or compel change in practices? There was additional discussion of looking at workload documents across Departments and Schools/Colleges (spanning teaching, scholarship, and service).

Discussions will continue. We could consider sub-committees. The Committee is asked to consider the presented questions and share ideas about how to proceed.

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Minutes submitted respectfully by Preston Britner.

## Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
Senate Executive Committee  
Motion to the University Senate  
TBD 2015

### Realignment of Dean's Constituency Representation to University Senate

#### A. Background

This proposal would expand the Dean's Constituency in the University Senate to include Associate Deans. The current by-laws allow for election of three representatives from the Dean's constituency and two electoral processes for faculty membership for election of 72 faculty representatives to the University Senate. Associate Deans are currently included in the faculty constituency and faculty-at-large electoral process. The proposed change acknowledges that Associate Deans are recognized as administrators and report to and act in place of Deans as needed. Therefore, they should be included in the Dean's constituency.

#### B. Current Relevant By-Law

By-Laws of the University of Connecticut, IX.A and IX.B

##### **A. Membership**

The University Senate shall consist of *ex officio* and elected members. The *ex officio* members shall be the President, the Provost, all Vice Presidents, except the Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, and all Vice Provosts. These *ex officio* members shall not vote.

The Senate shall contain ninety-one elected, voting members, as follows:

1. Three deans of the schools and colleges, which are Senate electoral constituencies (see Section B below).
2. Seventy-two members of the faculty elected according to one or the other of the two faculty electoral processes described in Section B.2. below.
3. Nine professional staff members elected by and from the constituencies described in Section B.3. below.
4. Five undergraduate students (see Section B.4 below).
5. Two graduate students (see Section B.5. below).

##### **B. Elections**

1. The Deans shall constitute a constituency from which they will elect one member each year for a three-year term.

2. Two electoral processes for faculty membership in the Senate shall be followed, (a) constituency and (b) at-large. Faculty members shall not be eligible to stand for election or to vote in the first regular election following their initial appointment to the faculty.

*a. Faculty constituency elections*

The voting members of the faculty (see Article X.A.) of each of the following units shall, for these purposes, be deemed an electoral constituency: College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, School of Business, Neag School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Fine Arts, School of Law, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, School of Social Work, and the Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury Regional Campuses. A person who is a voting member of more than one faculty will belong to only one constituency, that of the faculty in which his or her principal appointment is held.

The number of senators to be elected from each constituency will be one for each thirty faculty members or major fraction thereof within that constituency, with the proviso that each school, college, or regional campus will have at least one senator. The faculty of a school, college, or regional campus that is thus allocated more than one senator will have the option of establishing non-overlapping sub-constituencies. Senators chosen from a constituency will be elected by and from among the members of that constituency. The determination of the proper number of senators to be allocated to each constituency will be reviewed annually by the Senate. The annual schedule for electing members from each constituency shall be determined by the Senate in such a way as to provide for the optimum staggering of three-year terms within each constituency and for a reasonable degree of uniformity in the total number of members to be elected each year from all constituencies. To achieve these objectives, when a constituency becomes eligible to elect an additional senator, the initial term may be limited to one or two years in order that succeeding three-year terms may begin in the most appropriate years.

*b. At-large elections*

The number of faculty elected at-large will be the number remaining after the number of senators to be elected from constituencies is subtracted from seventy-two. Senators chosen at-large will be elected by and from the faculty electoral constituencies.

No school/college shall have more than five faculty representatives elected at-large except the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which may have no more than fifteen.

C. Proposal to Senate: Motion

To amend the By-Laws of the University of Connecticut as follows: (deleted items in strikethrough; new language underlined).

### **A. Membership**

The University Senate shall consist of *ex officio* and elected members. The *ex officio* members shall be the President, the Provost, all Vice Presidents, except the Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, and all Vice Provosts. These *ex officio* members shall not vote.

The Senate shall contain ninety-one elected, voting members, as follows:

1. Three deans and/or associate deans of the schools and colleges, which are Senate electoral constituencies (see Section B below).
2. Seventy-two members of the faculty elected according to one or the other of the two faculty electoral processes described in Section B.2. below.
3. Nine professional staff members elected by and from the constituencies described in Section B.3. below.
4. Five undergraduate students (see Section B.4 below).
5. Two graduate students (see Section B.5. below).

### **B. Elections**

1. The Deans and Associate Deans shall constitute a constituency from which they will elect one member each year for a three-year term.
2. Two electoral processes for faculty membership in the Senate shall be followed, (a) constituency and (b) at-large. Faculty members shall not be eligible to stand for election or to vote in the first regular election following their initial appointment to the faculty.

#### *a. Faculty constituency elections*

The voting members of the faculty (see Article X.A.) of each of the following units shall, for these purposes, be deemed an electoral constituency: College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, School of Business, Neag School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Fine Arts, School of Law, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, School of Social Work, and the Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury Regional Campuses. A person who is a voting member of more than one faculty will belong to only one constituency, that of the faculty in which his or her principal appointment is held.

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To be added are, once passed,  
Implementation: a plan will be developed

All faculty constituencies will need to be re-drawn as well with phased in so no one currently serving is removed. The whole process will take three election cycles.

## Appendix 2

Request from the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to FSC:

“The SEC would like Faculty Standards to take up the issue of how faculty may be encouraged to seek assistance in improving teaching when some set of indicators demonstrate clear problems in the classroom. Questions that can be interrogated include but are not limited to:

- What are the best measures for evaluating teaching?
- If we believe extremely poor teaching exists at UConn, what are the appropriate ways to document it?
- Should Faculty Standards encourage departments and programs to review teaching through peer review and mentorship programs?
- If the SET is insufficient to measure teaching what other options should be included?
- In the case of documented extremely poor teaching (for example consistent “1”s on the SET survey instrument and/or consistent and universal complaints) what options should a department head or dean have to invite, or require, the faculty to seek advice and help in improving teaching?
- What is the threshold, or triggering mechanisms are appropriate to bring a faculty member into positive set of steps to improve teaching?
- If over time, and after requests by the Department Head or Dean to invite the faculty member into a positive program of teaching improvement are rebuffed, what options should exist to require the faculty member to participate?
- To what extent is an inability to teach subject in English another factor in the perception of poor teaching in some instances?
- In the case that teaching in English is seen as a problem, what steps, consistent with, or separate from the above questions might be considered?

We consider this to be a broad charge, to be sure, and some discussion may be necessary to narrow it. As some of these questions are being discussed nationwide in the context of so-called, “Post Tenure Review”, The SEC feels it is important for faculty governance to take the lead on some of these questions ourselves, get out in front of the conversation and self-determine as possible what sorts of responses are reasonable to promote.

The SEC would like to receive a report on these questions by the end of the current academic year.”