

Faculty Council Annual Report, 2007-08

Members: Patricia DiBartolo; Elliot Fratkin; Borjana Mikic (Chair); Kevin Quashie; Janie Vanpee

Below are the major agenda items that Faculty Council took on for 2007-2008, as reported to the faculty at the start of the 07-08 academic year. Each agenda item is followed by progress made over the year and remaining work to be done.

Teaching Resource Center

Work with CAP to give a more concrete form to the foundational commitment to support pedagogical growth and innovation on the part of the faculty.

Update:

- Co-hosted visit by Chico Zimmerman, Director of the Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching, and associated Teaching Arts Lunch and Leadership Seminar
- Hosted second Teaching Arts Lunch to gather additional input on what elements would be important to include if we established a teaching resource center at Smith
- Coordinated a joint proposal from Faculty Council and CAP to the President and Provost on a teaching resource center and how it would support the goals of the strategic plan
- Working group convened by President Christ in January 2008, chaired by Kevin Shea
- Detailed working group proposal presented to President and Provost in May, 2008; proposal posted on Provost's website
- Proposal to be reviewed by CAP, CMP, and the Faculty during Fall Semester of 2008-09.

Structure and Role of Chairs & Directors

Find ways to support the work of Chairs and Directors (C/D) as local leaders of the institution

Update

- Met with C/D to obtain feedback on current structure and role of C/D at the College
- Worked to support a more activist role for C/D as a leadership body within the College, including:
 - Coordinated creation of a point person to collect input from C/D regarding the agenda and structure of the monthly chairs' meeting
 - Met with C/D to get their input on bigger picture leadership and faculty governance issues at the College, particularly with respect to the size of the faculty
 - Facilitated increased meetings between the President, Provost, and C/D
 - Regular email communications between Faculty Council and C/D regarding feedback on various suggested plans for managing the size of the faculty, faculty meeting discussion topics, etc.
- Formed an ad hoc subgroup of six Chairs and Directors (Rodger Blum, Nancy Bradbury, Justin Cammy, John Connolly, Martine Gantrel-Ford and Linda Jones) to develop more concrete recommendations for reform
- Final Faculty Council recommendations were summarized at the May 2008 faculty meeting (see minutes). Further discussions with faculty and implementation of suggestions, as appropriate, to occur in 2008-09.

Smith's Identity

Promote open and inclusive discussions of the dual nature of Smith's identity as both an outstanding liberal arts college as well as a women's college, and what the implications of that dual identity might mean for implementation of the strategic plan

Update:

Our work in this area focused on the issue of Smith's commitment to "women of promise." Smith has the highest percentage of Pell Grant recipients of the nation's thirty highest ranked liberal arts colleges¹. Our commitment to access by students from broad socio-economic backgrounds is something that we publicize proudly as an institution, yet it has far reaching financial ramifications, most notably in the form of our high discount rate. Faculty Council engaged in many discussions with the Provost, President, Trustees, CMP, ACRA and the faculty as a whole about the implications of this aspect of our mission for the future of the College. These discussions became increasingly important in light of the rapid changes in the landscape of financial aid policies in higher education during 2007-08 (i.e. no loan policies by many of our peer institutions). Council also worked to advocate for adequate staffing for academic support services and programs to ensure that all students have the skills they need to achieve academic excellence while at Smith.

Strategic Planning

On ACRA and in our meetings with the President, Provost, and Trustees, the members of Faculty Council view it as our responsibility to ask always if adequate resources have been set aside for implementation of the strategic plan.

Update:

- Facilitated faculty meeting discussion on the use of the budget surplus
- Facilitated faculty meeting discussion on priorities that should drive the size of the faculty
- Recommended that the President and Provost provide greater clarity to faculty regarding the remaining eight faculty positions to be cut, which ultimately resulted in CAP developing a list of recommended cuts followed by a final decision by the President and Provost at the end of 2007-08 regarding where the remaining cuts would be taken
- Maintained regular email communications between Faculty Council and Chairs and Directors regarding various proposed plans for managing the size of the faculty, and regularly summarized faculty feedback to President and Provost
- Recommended longer range planning meetings between the Administration and Chairs and Directors to help departments and programs plan for and address their long term staffing needs, as well as additional incentives to promote collaboration between academic units
- Recommended to the President that advisory groups be formed for the three Centers for Societal Leadership and Engagement to provide input on short and intermediate-term initiatives associated with each center (e.g. admissions initiatives)
- Represented Faculty Council on the working group for a Culture of Purposeful Inquiry (Quashie, DiBartolo)
- Represented Faculty Council on the Advising Task Force (Mikic)
- Represented Faculty Council on the working group for the Teaching & Learning Center (Mikic)

¹http://www.jbhe.com/features/57_pellgrants.html

- Recommended to the President and Provost that an ad hoc committee, with representation from the IRB, look into IRB processes in the context of supporting a culture of purposeful inquiry
- Advocated for faculty concerns on ACRA, particularly with respect to (1) setting aside funds to further smooth the impact of decreasing the size of the faculty, and (2) obtaining additional administrative support for departments and programs

Work/Life Balance Issues

Work with CFCD and Human Resources to examine our policies and practices in support of the foundational commitment to attract and retain outstanding faculty. In particular, Faculty Council is interested in finding ways to help members of the faculty build and maintain rewarding and successful careers as well as simultaneously care for their families, broadly defined.

Update:

- Met with Registrar and others to explore the possibility of rearranging the daily schedule to allow for unscheduled blocks of time in the middle of the day when meetings could be held. Due to the complex nature of this undertaking, as well as the other items on our agenda, this initiative was tabled for 2007-08.
- Met with Larry Hunt, Georgia Yuan, and John Davis in April 2008 to work on a more inclusive parental leave policy. This policy was approved in July 2008 and will be announced at the September 2008 faculty meeting.

Other

- Leadership Seminars on the Operating Budget, Teaching Resource Center, Student Academic Support Services, and Diversity Issues and Teaching
- Regular meetings with the Trustees in October, March, and May
- Representation on CAP (Vanpée), CMP (Quashie & DiBartolo), CFCD (Fratkin), ACRA (all)
- Representation on Admissions Market Research Committee (DiBartolo)
- Involved in consultant focus group interviews regarding the possibility of arming public safety officers on campus
- Oversaw the spring faculty elections. David Cohen served as ballot chair, and in 2008-09 Joseph O'Rourke will succeed him.

Faculty Council 2008-09

Patricia DiBartolo, Howard Gold, Kevin Quashie (Chair), Janie Vanpée, Greg White

The Council representatives to elected and appointed committees are as follows:

Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA): all members of Council
 Committee on Academic Priorities: Janie Vanpee
 Committee on Faculty Compensation and Development: Howard Gold
 Committee on Missions and Priorities: Greg White, Patricia DiBartolo