

## **School of Education (SoE) Academic Planning Council (APC) Assessment**

This report includes a brief summary of policies governing campus APCs followed by a description of the SoE APC. Reference to other campus APCs is provided as appropriate. This report ends with a set of recommendations for consideration by Dean Hess and the current SoE APC.

In preparing this report, several sources of data were referenced. These included:

- Faculty Policies and Procedures (FP&P), section 3.08;
- Charge and Mission Statements for SoE, L&S, School of Business, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs), College of Engineering and the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) APCs;
- Minutes for SoE APC meetings for the time period spanning Sept. 2013-August 2015;
- Selected minutes from other campus APCs;
- Annual Reports for selected other campus APCs;
- Information from SoE Department Administrators and Chairs on departmental APC election/selection procedures;
- Feedback from current and former members of the SoE and selected other campus APCs (i.e., 2 former department chairs, 3 current department chairs, 1 current academic staff APC member, 4 Associate Deans, 2 faculty members of other APCs).

### **APC Membership and Meeting Processes Per FP&P**

- APC should be comprised predominantly of faculty (at least 2/3) who represent the interests and views of the school and are elected by the faculty of the school.
- While associate deans can be appointed by the Dean to serve on the APC, 2/3 of the membership needs to be elected faculty not serving a major administrative role beyond the department.
- At least one member of the APC should be an academic staff person whose primary responsibilities are instruction, outreach and/or research.
- The selection process for APC membership should foster representation of the major divisions of study within the school.

### **APC Functions Per FP&P**

**APCs are advisory committees to deans.** Rules governing APC membership make clear that APCs have the function of providing advice to the dean from a faculty perspective. According to FP&P, APCs provide advice to the Dean in a number of arenas and that advice should reflect consideration of the school's responsibilities to:

1. High quality teaching, research and public service;
2. The ability of the school to fulfill its mission;
3. Budgetary constraints;
4. The goals of the university's affirmative action plans.

Some APCs across campus have delineated additional or more specific areas in which their APCs provide advice to their Deans. In CALs, for example, the APC provides advice on the prioritization of faculty hires across departments. In SMPH, the APC provides advice on mission-aligned allocation of resources and faculty promotions within rank.

### **SoE APC Structure.**

SoE's 10 department chairs, along with one academic staff person elected from CASI, comprise the APC. Having one member from each department is one way to conceptualize

the school's "major divisions" and therefore comply with the spirit of FP&P in terms of representation. However there are others that could be considered. For example in L&S the 8 elected members are from the four major divisions of humanities, social sciences, biological sciences and physical sciences. In CALS, faculty are elected from departmental clusters, ensuring that representation on the APC is proportionate to the number of faculty in any given discipline. In the SoE, one could envision elections from the major categories of teacher education, clinical training, arts, and leadership/graduate training or departmental clusters.

In SoE, two departments create annual ballots so that their faculty can vote to have their chair serve on APC. The remaining 8 departments have their chair attend APC by tradition.

The APC meets concurrently with the much larger Administrative Council (AC), which is comprised of senior administrative staff, unit directors, department chairs, and students. This structure limits APC members' ability to provide substantive feedback to the Dean in several ways:

- Monthly agendas are populated predominantly by items that are shared for information purposes only for the larger SoE community.
- AC members outnumber APC members by a ratio of greater than 2:1. As such, the sheer volume of individuals in the room (i.e., 30+) limits the ability of APC members' to contribute to the discussion.
- This bulkiness of the combined AC/APC meeting structure contributes to the council voting on items with little or no discussion. This, in turn, promulgates a culture where substantive discussion is not the norm.

### **APC Meeting Topics**

Agenda topics are summarized below as they relate to the major topics for APC deliberation that are identified in FP&P. Those major topics include:

- 1. Program Reviews**
- 2. Development or Contraction of Programs**
- 3. Strategic and Long-term Planning**
- 4. Programmatic Decisions that Affect Tenure**
- 5. Budget Planning**
- 6. Other Factors that Affect the School's Ability to Fulfill its Mission**

Because APC and AC meetings are held concurrently, agendas and meeting minutes for these two bodies are combined into single written documents. While AC items are always noted separate from APC items in the agendas, meeting minutes show clear reference to APC discussion of items during the AC portion of meetings. Therefore, topics from both the AC and APC portions of the monthly meetings were considered in this summary. Over the two-year period, 63 agenda items (excluding approvals of minutes) were considered in the AC portion of the meetings and an additional 55 items were considered in the APC portion.

**Program Reviews** - The APC seems to be fulfilling its responsibility to provide the dean with feedback on program reviews. Although discussion was limited – and approval of reviews and plans to review were all unanimous – each review was accompanied by both a written and verbal report provided by a member of the affected department or unit.

**Development or Contraction of Programs** – APC was regularly informed and consulted about program development and proposed deletion of programs. Approximately 50% of these items were presented to the combined APC/AC for a vote with little or no discussion.

Another 25% of these items were presented to APC as information only and a final 25% generated enough notable discussion that the points raised were recorded in the minutes. In all cases, motions were approved unanimously with only a few amendments made to the motions.

**Strategic and Long-term Planning** - APC/AC members were involved in approving strategic plans for the SoE. After an initial vote to reapprove the SoE's mission, many opportunities were given for the combined APC/AC to share ideas and engage in small group activities designed to seek input and guidance on the SoE's evolving strategic plan. These activities were referred to frequently as "Futures Planning." Over the two-year period, APC members were also afforded many opportunities to hear reports from various work-groups that were tasked with fleshing out priorities and action plans for the evolving strategic plan. While the broad discussions and activities certainly promoted involvement by many SoE stakeholders, APC members were not specifically targeted to give the dean advice.

**Decisions that Affect Tenure** – No items were given consideration in this category.

**Budget Planning** - Discussions related to budget planning were largely absent from the AY 2013-14 APC meetings. However, in AY 2014-15, budgetary issues were noted 8 times on the APC agendas. Two of those eight items were reports from Associate Deans (i.e., Rosenthal & Jorgenson updating APC on the summer school budget allocation process; Amos-Landgraf updating the group on the status of the Compression Equity and High Demand exercises). Five other times, budget plans, and their implications, were discussed by the large group. Once, in October 2014, the Dean sought approval of the SoE's draft budget plan to be submitted to the Chancellor.

**Other Factors that Affect the School's Ability to Fulfill its Mission** - Notably, almost half of all the items on APC/AC agendas over the two-year period were related to topics not clearly in the domain of APC. However, given that APCs are also charged with considering "other factors" that affect the school's ability to fulfill its mission when they are giving advice to the Dean - it is certainly plausible that many of the other broad issues placed on the APC agenda might influence APC members' thinking. Of the other issues that were noted, the large majority (75%) were updates and information-only items (e.g., update on development efforts, announcement about the creation of the "Network"). A smaller number of these items were presented as voting items and had a clear link to instruction, (e.g., approval of a "Credit by exam" policy, approval of a revised Pass/Fail policy).

Over the two-year period, little evidence of the APC soliciting or sharing departmental or broader SoE views on issues raised for discussion was noted. Occasionally a presenter (e.g., Associate Dean Jeff Hamm) would raise an issue for discussion a month before it was to be voted on so that APC members could request feedback from their faculty colleagues before voting. However, this was not the norm.

Consideration of campus affirmative action plans was only evidenced a few times. Each time, this took the form of Associate Dean Dang Chonwerawong, who was serving as an AC (not an APC) member, forwarding a perspective or sharing a summary of an effort being undertaken by the SoE Equity and Diversity Committee.

**Summary and Recommendations:**

Overall, the current structure of the APC does not appear to facilitate the APC adequately meeting its charge as outlined in FP&P, which is to provide advice to the Dean from a faculty perspective across a range of topics related to the mission of the SoE.

Based on my review, four challenges associated with the current operation of the SoE APC are identified and recommendations are made for consideration.

**Challenge 1: Group size is unwieldy for substantive discussion.**

1. Hold APC meetings separate from the larger AC. This would improve meeting efficiency, facilitate the group giving APC-specific advice, as well as ensure that the spirit of FP&P-stipulated APC membership rules are met (i.e., at least 2/3s of members are faculty).
2. Create a smaller, dedicated APC, with 6-10 elected faculty members.

**Challenge 2: Broad SoE views and opinions are not clearly reflected in APC discussions.**

1. Update the APC charge and create a policy document that provides APC members with information necessary for them to understand their role and responsibilities specific to this governance body.
2. Increase Academic Staff members to include different categories of representation.
3. Allow APC members to suggest agenda items, in addition to items added by the Dean and Associate Deans.

**Challenge 3: APC discussion topics only partially align with FP&P-stated functions.**

1. Create agendas that focus on issues where discussion is desired.
2. Create another mechanism for announcements and updates on ongoing initiatives. This could include monthly email communications and/or an annual all-school meeting.
3. Appoint one member to the committee who is familiar with campus diversity initiatives to ensure that consideration of equity and affirmative action policies are not overlooked in discussions.
4. Invite the Chair of SoE Programs Committee to serve as an ad hoc member to create easy communication channels between the APC and the Programs Committee.

**Challenge 4: The current use of Department Chairs for APC membership may not be optimal and is non-compliant with FP&P requirement that APC members are elected.**

1. As the dean has instituted monthly Chairs meetings, the current structure of having department chairs serve on APC appears to duplicate advice being provided to the dean. Additionally, this configuration increases the administrative burden on department chairs.
2. De-coupling APC membership from department chair-ship would allow the Dean to maintain some year-to-year consistency in her advisory council. Currently, membership on APC can fluctuate greatly in the years in which there are many new Department Chairs. This year, for example, there are 5 new Chairs.
3. If school-wide elections for APC membership were adopted, APC members could serve staggered 3-year terms (in keeping with the norm in other schools and colleges) to ensure that no more than 33% of the council would turn over in any given year.
4. Holding elections for APC membership would ensure that individuals serving on APC have a vested and specific interest in APC participation and would bring the SoE APC into compliance with FP&P.