

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORT 2013-14

During the 2013-14 academic year, the University Committee met every Wednesday from 3:00-5:00 PM, except during meetings of the Faculty Senate and on holidays. Members of the committee included Greg Davis (Speaker of the Faculty Senate), Mimi Kubsch, Ryan Martin, Steve Meyer, Cristina Ortiz, and Bryan Vescio (Chair). Kristi Aoki served as Academic Staff Representative, and Heba Mohammad served as Student Government Association Representative.

Our meetings were markedly collegial and efficient, and they benefitted greatly from the experience of two members who had served as Chair of the University Committee in the past. The committee's discussions of university business were always informed by larger discussions of the state and future of higher education. Assisting in these discussions were Provost Julia Wallace, who met with us at most meetings, and SOFAS Cliff Abbott, who joined us before each Senate meeting to help set the agenda and whom we frequently had occasion to consult on matters of policy and institutional memory. Chancellor Thomas Harden also provided some much needed guidance to the committee at various times throughout the year.

2013-14 was a year of change for our university, and managing these changes consumed much of the University Committee's time. Many of the initiatives the committee brought before the Senate involved implementing changes to policies and programs that had been endorsed by the previous Senate, but a number of new changes to the structure of the university were also introduced. One point of continuity between the previous University Committee and this year's committee was the effort to maintain open lines of communication among faculty, staff, administration, and students on our campus, and to this end, we invited a number of guest speakers to make informational presentations to the Senate on various issues pressing to our community. Because an unusually large amount of our business addressed needs that emerged from various quarters of campus during the course of the year, we did not meet some of the larger goals we set for ourselves this year. But we were guided by the idea that our committee's job is to respond to the needs of those who work and study on our campus, and even when we failed to meet those needs satisfactorily we believe we helped to advance conversations that are vital for our campus to pursue during this era of change.

Fall 2013

1. **Committee charges:** In the fall, the University Committee brought two changes to committee charges before the Senate. One involved clarifications in the role of the General Education Council in assessing the General Education Program—a change proposed in light of the inauguration of a new General Education Program on campus—and its reporting obligations. Another involved dividing the Library and Instructional Technology Committee into two separate committees, the Library Advisory Committee and the Learning Technology Collaborative Committee.
2. **Policy changes:** The committee also sought the Senate's advice on and endorsement of proposed changes in the university's policy on the admission of international students,

changes aimed at ensuring that students for whom English is a second language are better prepared for their courses on our campus.

3. **Communication and Information:** The University Committee scheduled a number of presentations before the Senate to update faculty on a number of internal and external changes affecting our campus. Associate Provost Andrew Kersten and Registrar Amanda Hruska were invited to inform Senators about the transition to Courseleaf software for the management of catalogs, course changes, and advising. In the fall of 2013, Chancellor Harden had pledged to provide earlier and more frequent information about budget issues and plans for addressing them, and to that end he made a presentation to the Senate on the administration's progress in crafting a budget and further budget challenges that might arise in the next year. Much of our time at University Committee meetings in the fall was devoted to discussion of the crisis in enrollment that is upon us, and our many discussions with the Provost and Dean of Enrollment Services Mike Stearney led to an open forum at Senate in which Dean Stearney presented data and projections and discussed ways of addressing the problem with faculty.
4. **Resolutions:** At the end of the fall semester, the University Committee also introduced a resolution supporting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which also produced a useful discussion of the role of this increasingly prominent form of scholarship on our campus.

Spring 2014

1. **Chancellor Search Committee:** Chancellor Harden's announcement that he would be stepping down and the timeline announced by the UW-System for the search for his successor created a flurry of activity on the part of the University Committee over winter break. The committee had to assemble a large committee at fairly short notice, but the committee was in place and began its work by the middle of January.
2. **Committee Charges/Code Changes:** In the spring, code changes were passed to alter slightly the composition of the Academic Actions committee and to clarify the ability of Graduate Faculty to serve as voting members of more than one graduate program.
3. **Programs:** Two important changes to academic programs were considered by the Senate, but only one was endorsed. Two of the newly-approved Engineering Technology programs were designated as Professional Programs, exempting them from the requirement of an interdisciplinary minor. The committee also brought to the Senate a proposal to eliminate the requirement of upper-level credits for a minor, but that proposal was rejected on the basis of concerns about maintaining the rigor of minors.
4. **Policies:** At the behest of various constituencies across campus, the committee presented a number of policy changes to the Senate, some of which were more successful than others. Associate Provost Andrew Kersten earned approval from the Senate for a proposal to alter the way the university grants posthumous degrees, and the Committee of Six Full Professors' proposed changes to guidelines for promotion to Full Professor were accepted after a protracted but useful debate about standards for scholarship. Two policies that did not fare so well, however, were a proposed policy on the teaching of self-authored texts that was brought to Senate at the request of Deans and unit chairs and a proposal for defining essential job functions that was suggested by some unit chairs and Human Resources. Both these proposals were perceived by many Senators as unwarranted efforts to curtail faculty rights, which is certainly understandable in a

climate in which faculty rights are increasingly being called into question by those outside the university. Although the proposals did not pass, the University Committee maintains that a climate in which faculty rights are under assault by others is one in which it is especially important for faculty to discuss their responsibilities among themselves. If nothing else, the proposals allowed such discussions to take place. One more policy that was introduced in the spring was a proposal to re-establish a process for Administrator Evaluation. Although the policy was modeled almost verbatim on one that had actually been implemented in 2007, the Senate perceived potential legal issues that will necessitate its reintroduction in 2014-15.

5. **Communication:** A major contribution to improving communication and transparency on campus was also achieved when the University Committee worked with Chancellor Harden to name members of a reconstituted Chancellor's Council on Planning and Budget. We hope this body will continue into the next administration in its present form.

In addition to other unfinished business mentioned above, this year's University Committee was unable to make much progress on one of its most significant aspirations: the establishment of a Center for Research on campus to parallel our Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. Such a center was envisioned by the previous two University Committees, and we hope that it will finally be realized by the next one.

I want to thank personally the members of the committee for their diligence and collegiality, including the Academic Staff Representative Kristi Aoki and the Student Government Association Representative Heba Mohammad. I know that next year's committee, led by incoming Chair Steve Meyer and incoming Speaker of the Senate John Lyon, will be an effective one and will carry on the spirit of open communication and service to the university that I hope has marked our work this year. Thanks again are also due to Provost Wallace, SOFAS Abbott, and Chancellor Harden for making a difficult job somewhat easier.

Respectfully submitted,
Bryan Vescio, Chair