

Review of General Faculty Committee Activities for 2003-2004
Senate Address, June 1, 2004
Bruce Wessels, GFC Chair

I would like to take this opportunity to review the General Faculty Committee's (GFC) activities this year. The GFC serves as the steering committee of the University senate and has elected representatives from all the schools in the university. There are currently 19 members in the GFC, including three at large members. In order to promote the role of the GFC in faculty and university governance, its sub-committee structure was reactivated this year. There are now seven active sub-committees, representing key activities of the University and its faculty. These include:

1. Budget and policy
2. Benefits
3. Education
4. Faculty development
5. Research

In addition there are standing committees: the Committee on Cause and the Committee on Committees.

The new addition to the sub-committee roster is the Budget and Policy committee. Some of you may remember the GFC Budget and Resource Allocation Committee (BRAC) of the seventies and eighties. This committee served as an important advisory committee to the president and the senate. BRAC, however, was suspended during a time of financial exigency. The newly formed Budget and Policy committee has the mission to advise the senate on matters of budget and policy that affect the faculty university wide. The president has supported the committee in its mission. The committee meets at least quarterly with VP Sunshine and his staff to discuss the university budget and its development. The ultimate goal is to serve as an informed faculty body in the area of university budget and policy. It also serves in the formulation of the GFC annual budget request presentation to the University administration budget committee. This winter the GFC made its first presentation to the university budget committee. The GFC budget and policy committee has made excellent progress towards meeting its mission under the leadership of Prof. Debbie Lucas of Kellogg.

University faculty committees are major sources of information and advice in the formulation of university policy. The GFC believes that it is important to have broad representation on university committees of strategic importance. This concept has been supported by the provost's office. In order to diversify faculty representation on key university committees, the GFC Committee on Committees was reinstated. This year the GFC committee has made nominations for the provost's committee on the Order of Excellence, the Graduate School Dean search committee, and the VP of Research advisory committee. It also provided nominees for VP Cabbage's strategic communication committee and VP McCoy's program review council.

The research sub-committee under the leadership of Prof. Eva Redei of the Medical School has been actively deliberating on issues of research infra structure and compliance. The committee has devised a process of vetting faculty concerns on these matters. A communications access line

operated by the GFC has now been setup and is operational. Details are given in the GFC website. VP President Moore has been supportive of this activity.

The Education sub-committee and its subcommittee on athletics have been involved in the nation wide intercollegiate athletics reform movement. Last year the GFC and the Senate voted to support the Council on Inter-institutional Co-operation (CIC) document on intercollegiate athletics reform. The CIC is comprised of the Big 10 universities and U. of Chicago. This document was widely supported by the faculty senates of the Big 10. This year the CIC and its university members joined forces with faculty senates of other Bowl Championship Series (BCS) leagues to draft a document with substantive reforms in the governance of intercollegiate athletics at the institutional level. The group entitled the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) met at NCAA headquarters last October. A steering committee was formed and subsequently a document was formulated this winter. This document is posted on the GFC web site. A main point of the document is that faculty senates should be more actively involved in governance of intercollegiate athletics. It should insure that athletics be supportive of the educational mission of the university. The GFC voted unanimously in favor of the COIA document. While Northwestern has an enviable record especially in graduation rates of its athletes compared to most of its peer institutions, further integration of the athletics program into the university academic mission is needed. There should be more faculty and senate involvement. The COIA reforms on governance should be instituted.

In addition to the aforementioned committees, the benefits sub-committee has been meeting with the VP for Human Resources on a variety of issues. These include the portable tuition program and improvements in health care plans in the area of mental health and extended benefits for retirees.

Continuing issues

While the GFC has had an extensive agenda, there, of course, remain other important matters that it should, and will be addressing in the future. They include:

1. Research infrastructure development
2. Achieving diversity in the faculty and student body
3. Educational programs: the balance between arts, sciences and professional education
4. Strategic planning at the university level.

As to strategic planning, this activity will play an ever more important role. As indicated by President Bienen in his recent state of the university address, the university is on firm financial ground. Nevertheless the University has limited resources, and their growth is limited. The growth in the endowment seen in the nineties will most likely not return. Tuition income increases need to be limited to attain a diverse student body. In light of these limitations, the question to the faculty senate is whether or not we should be doing all that we are doing as a university. Should we be making hard choices on the educational programs that we are now sustaining? Where are the resources going to come from to establish the new programs that will form the basis of scholarship for the next generation? While there will be some growth in the

endowment and new gifts to the university, we need to develop the discipline to make hard choices. Should we keep substandard or mediocre programs?

Alternatively the university could be developing new sources of income. For example patent development and company development by the faculty are being pursued. Is it consistent with the university mission? Is pursuit of commercialism in our best interest?

The president and the provost will address some of these issues today. In any case these issues should be the subjects of a continuing dialogue between the faculty and the administration.