March 9, 2015

Dear Colleagues of the Committee on Academic Affairs:

On behalf of the Subcommittee on Faculty Governance of the Committee on Academic Affairs, I am pleased to transmit the draft work products of three working groups—participation, deans search and review, and school rules and procedures. The draft work product on appointment, promotion, and tenure has not been finished by the working group and will be transmitted to you upon its completion.

The working groups appreciated the detailed feedback on their initial recommendations from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on January 27, 2015. The remainder of this letter provides high-level rationale for the current revisions to the Faculty Code and Faculty Organization Plan, as written by various working group members representing the Board of Trustees, Faculty and Administration.

As you know, we sent an email on March 4 asking you to sign up for one of three conference calls in March to discuss and review these three work products (and, we expect, the recommendations from the working group on appointment, promotion, and tenure). If you have not done so already, please contact Liz Anderson at carlson@email.gwu.edu.

Finally, I want to once again thank trustees Scott Amey, Wes Burnett, Terry Collins, Kyle Farmbry, Titi Harley, Grace Speights, and recent trustee Mark Hughes for their leadership of these working groups and Nelson for his overall guidance and support. I look forward to speaking with you in March on our conference calls.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Jacobs
Chair, Subcommittee on Faculty Governance
Committee on Academic Affairs
Board of Trustees

CC: President Steven Knapp
    Provost Steven Lerman
    Chair of the Board of Trustees Nelson Carbonell
    Professor Charles Garris, Chair, Faculty Senate Executive Committee
Participation

The working group considered various restrictions for membership in the Faculty Senate. Among the restrictions considered were tenure-status, rank, years of service in the academy, and years of service at GW. After much discussion, the working group realized that these are issues that will be addressed by each faculty member when they select their representatives through the voting process established in each of their schools. The working group decided to trust the faculty of each school and enable them to have the ability to decide who will represent their school at the Faculty Senate.

Consequently, the working group chose to set only a few restrictions on membership in the Faculty Senate: rank of associate professor or higher and full time service on the faculty. The working group also updated existing language within the Faculty Organization Plan to restrict faculty members serving in the Provost’s office from serving in the Faculty Senate.

Moreover, on January 27, 2015, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee’s (EC) wrote in its detailed feedback to the working groups that “the majority of the faculty members representing each school in the Faculty Senate must hold tenured appointments.” The working group believed that this rule will significantly impact certain schools, such as the School of Nursing, in their ability to decide who will represent them in the Faculty Senate, when there are a limited number of eligible candidates. The working group recognizes that there is a strong concern regarding the potential for at least half of the members of the Faculty Senate to be non-tenured members of the faculty. However, the working group believes that faculty must be trusted to take this into consideration, among many other factors, in determining who will best represent their school at the Faculty Senate. By making the above rule, the person who best represents their school, in reality, may not even be a candidate.

Dean Search and Review

The working group sought to streamline standards for dean searches by evaluating best practices used by each school, resulting in a set of uniform, but minimum standards to make search processes more efficient. Further, the working group sought to enfranchise non-tenured faculty members involved in deans searches. Through new proposed language in the Faculty Code, specialized faculty (currently termed research, special service, and limited service) would be able to serve on search committees and have equal voting rights as their tenured peers. Additionally, as the fiduciaries of the university, members of the Board of Trustees serving on a search committee would also be extended the ability to vote on a search committee.

The purpose of the provisions on dean search committees was designed to set basic standards but permit each college to decide the actual composition of their search committee. The working group adopted a minimum standard that a search committee must have at least five
full-time faculty members (as suggested by the EC). The working group believes trustee participation should not be capped within the Faculty Code, which would limit the governing power of the Board of Trustees.

The working group established baseline voting rights for search committees, leaving the subject to individual schools to determine additional suffrage rights (staff, alumni, students). Many working group members believe alumni, students, and others would more fully participate in deans searches if they were extended voting rights, based on their contributions of time and energy to a search. This would also greatly contribute to the successful debut of a new dean to know that all constituencies participated and hopefully agreed on the final selection.

The working group adopted an issue raised by the EC concerning language for a search committee to define criteria for the dean. The working group proposed language on this issue and believes each search committee must receive final approval on search criteria from the Provost and each college should decide whether the search criteria would need approval from the school's faculty. A cautionary note would be to avoid too many time-consuming steps that slow the actual start of the search.

The working group believes the President and Provost should be free to specify the number of candidates they desire to interview.

Furthermore, the working group also drafted new language concerning a periodic comprehensive review of deans, designed to better assess the work of deans and help deans develop by giving them helpful feedback. The purpose of the creation of this new section in the Faculty Code was to create a process that helps deans succeed in leading their schools, hence the process should be a comprehensive review and not a comprehensive evaluation. The review process would solicit input from multiple constituencies at the college. The intent of this language is to be constructive, which is why the results would be confidential to the dean, President, Provost, and Board of Trustees. The Provost would share the top-line findings with the faculty. However, a dean may choose to share whatever he or she chooses from the evaluation.

The working group amended language in the current Faculty Code concerning votes of no-confidence for deans, underlining that this procedure is an option of last resort.

With respect to associate deans, the working group proposes that each dean should be allowed to build his or her team while abiding by procedures approved by the school's full-time faculty and with the Provost's final approval. The working group believes a faculty vote to confirm the dean's decision concerning these positions is unnecessary.
School Rules and Procedures

The working group on School Rules and Procedures sought to accomplish two things: (1) streamline the Faculty Code’s complex and convoluted structure of faculty titles and grades of academic personnel and (2) identify a common set of rules that each school at the university should maintain within its own rules and procedures.

With respect to grades of academic personnel, the working group recommends several changes to the Faculty Code. First, the working group recommends that three individual grades of academic personnel from the current Faculty Code (limited service, special service, research staff) be consolidated under a new grade termed “specialized faculty.”

Second, the working group recommends specifying that non-tenure accruing faculty within the “regular faculty” grade of academic personnel should be defined as being on “presumptively renewable contract.” The working group added “presumptively” because “renewable contract” alone does not indicate the long-term relationship with the university that is comparable to a tenure track position such that the person would be considered “regular.” The inclusion of “presumptively” reflects this long-term commitment.

Third, the working group advocates for maintaining the existing 75-25 requirement of the current Faculty Code, which requires 75% of regular full-time faculty of a school to hold tenure-accruing appointments. The working group proposes the creation of a provision to permit a school to request a different ratio in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate and the approval of the Provost. This provision removes the need to exempt certain schools from the 75-25 goal as schools that were previously exempted will have to meet the amended ratio as agreed upon with the Provost.

Fourth, the EC suggested a requirement that 50% of the regular faculty in each department must hold a tenure-accruing appointment. The working group disagrees with this suggestion, for two reasons. The first reason being that this provision would limit the flexibility of schools to create programs and departments based on the needs of the market, and second being that there are many departments at the university that are composed entirely of non-tenure accruing contract faculty (i.e., Corcoran, Art Therapy) which would not be able to meet this requirement.

Finally, the working group researched the rules and procedures of each of the ten schools across the university. Working group members then constructed a list of core areas that each school should legislate on within their own rules and procedures. The EC had no changes to the working group’s recommendation on school rules and procedures.