

Faculty Senate Minutes
May 28, 2002

Senate Members Present: B. Anton, K. Bartanen, T. Cooney, B. Haltom, J. Hanson, K. Hummel-Berry, H. Ostrom, (Chair), K. Porter, B. Shelton, D. Tinsley, A. Tullis, R. Wilson, P. Wimberger

Visitors Present: J. Dickson, K. Maxwell, S. Holland, Y.P. Huo, W. Lowrie, J.D. Macey, W. Rickoll, G. Tomlin, M. Veseth, K. Ward, A. Wood

Ostrom called the meeting to order around 10 am.

Ostrom opened the meeting by noting that his goal for the meeting was to find out what information the Senate would like him to convey to Mr. Weyerhaeuser and the Board of Trustees regarding the selection process for a new President of the University.

Ostrom provided some context by briefly recalling some of the procedures used in the last presidential search (1991). A faculty election was held to select six nominees to serve on the presidential search committee. The Board of Trustees then selected three of these nominees (Clifford, Veseth, and Wood) to serve on the committee. Ostrom also noted that in the 1991 search the faculty as a whole did not have any chance to meet any of the presidential candidates before the selection was finalized and that this generated some controversy. Ostrom then opened the floor to discussion of the presidential search process.

What followed was a lively and wide-ranging discussion that centered on the following questions.

1. How should faculty representatives to the presidential search committee be selected?

In an email message from William T. Weyerhaeuser dated May 24, 2002 he asked "that the Faculty Senate, upon the return of the faculty in mid-August, conduct an election that will provide at least six candidates [to the presidential search committee] from which the Board will select three". This was the process that was used in the last presidential search (1991). In response to a question from Haltom, Veseth recalled that in 1991 the top three vote getters from the faculty election were asked to be on the search committee, but one of them withdrew, so the next highest vote getter was selected. Lowrie noted that in the 1973/74 presidential search, there were 5 faculty representatives on the search committee and that these representatives were selected directly by the faculty. He opined that it was better to allow faculty to directly select their representatives. In his estimation, this process had resulted in a very effective search committee during the 73/74 search.

Haltom agreed that faculty should select their representatives directly. He further noted that one rationale for having the trustees select from a slate of candidates might be to insure a certain level of diversity (e.g., assuring that no two representatives were from the same department). But that if this was the case, he opined that the faculty were quite able to devise a selection scheme that would meet any such criteria. He suggested that we could ask Weyerhaeuser what criteria the board of trustees would like to use in selecting the candidates, and the faculty could then respond.

Tinsley spoke in support of the notion that faculty should be able to directly elect the people who will represent them. Cooney noted that direct elections don't always play out in the most smooth or logical manner.

Hummel-Berry stated that having a faculty body select faculty representatives would make faculty feel better about the process. Wilson agreed that it is important for faculty to feel connected to the presidential search process. She feels that faculty should have complete control over selection of the faculty representatives to the search committee.

Veseth argued that, in the spirit of cooperation, he would like to accept the trustees' suggestions for the selection process.

Haltom stated that he hadn't heard any good reasons why faculty shouldn't select their representatives directly. Lowrie agreed and suggested that Weyerhaeuser might not really care about how the representatives are selected, but had simply suggested the process used last time.

In response to a question from Holland, Ostrom clarified that it is the trustees' prerogative to select the president and the search process was ultimately their decision. Wimberger agreed, but added that this was our opportunity to let our wishes be known. Cooney suggested that while this is true, there might be a big difference between suggesting to the board a single change in the process versus suggesting 4 or 5 significant changes. Tullis agreed with Wimberger that we need to convey to the board our feelings on the matter.

Hummel-Berry suggested the following motion, which passed unanimously (with 2 abstentions).

M/S/P That the faculty senate chair convey to the trustees the senate's preference to have the faculty representatives to the presidential search committee be selected directly by the faculty.

2. Should the process for selecting faculty representatives to the search committee include a component that insures a certain diversity (e.g., require one member from the humanities, one from the social sciences, one from the sciences, and one from the professional schools)?

Veseth noted that the faculty representatives on the presidential search committee in 1991 had meetings with the faculty to get their input in the process, but due to the confidential nature of the search it was not possible to go back to the faculty with specific questions about specific candidates. He also noted that the faculty representatives used their best judgment to represent the interests of the University as a whole, rather than some specific constituency.

Since the election scheme that was suggested by the board is similar to the one used in the faculty code to select members to the faculty advancement committee (FAC), Veseth wondered whether the interpretation of how the members to the FAC were selected by the Dean (from the possible candidates elected by the faculty) was written down anywhere. Cooney replied that the part about not having more than one representative from any one department was written in the bylaws, but that other aspects of diversity such as gender, age, status (Assistant/Associate/Full) were important considerations but not written down anywhere.

Wimberger noted that if the number of representatives were increased by one, this would permit one representative each from the humanities, social sciences, sciences & math, and professional schools.

Veseth stated that the need for diverse representation assumes that we have narrow interests as opposed to common interests. Wimberger replied that we do have discipline-specific interests as well as common interests, and he didn't see anything wrong with having someone looking out for our specific interests.

Wood echoed Veseth's sentiment about the importance of focusing on the common interests during a presidential search. She noted that you are looking for someone who stands for and expresses the things that this University has developed over the years and that you look at the whole person and the whole university more than any individual interests. This is the natural evolution you want during the search.

Maxwell agreed with Wood, but didn't see that this was necessarily an argument against having broader representation. Wood conceded that it didn't necessarily argue against having broader representation, but simply that the members of the search committee would not be trying to represent narrow interests.

Tinsley reiterated Haltom's earlier suggestion that we could ask the trustees what type of diversity they were looking for in the faculty representatives. Wood replied that the trustees are not as familiar with the types of diversity that might be important to faculty, so that if the faculty is concerned about diversity, it should come up with its own criteria.

Dickson noted that there are some constituencies around campus that have been disenfranchised so he would like to see representatives from across campus. He felt that this was an opportunity to let these groups have representation in this important process.

Wilson and Hanson both expressed support for the idea that if there needs to be a breadth of representation on the committee, then the faculty senate should be the body to do this screening. Tomlin argued that the process should be as simple and transparent as possible, and that this could best be achieved by having faculty select their representatives directly through an election.

Ostrom inquired if we should put any constraints on the election (e.g., should no two representatives be from the same department). There seemed to be a consensus that it would be best just to have a direct election modeled after the method used to select the faculty senate. Thus there would be primary, followed by a final ballot, with no attempt made to insure any specific type of diversity in the representatives.

3. How many faculty representatives should be on the search committee?

Wimberger argued for having a larger number of faculty representatives on the search committee. He thought that having 5 faculty members and 5 trustees on the search committee (like in the 73/74) search would be good. Even if the number of representatives were increased by one, this would permit one representative from the humanities, social sciences, sciences & math, and professional schools.

Bartanen noted that if faculty make the argument that they need more representatives, then it might raise the question of whether students and staff need more representatives.

In response to a question by Anton, Lowrie and Veseth noted that in the last two presidential searches the committee was unanimous in its support of the final candidate. Wood noted that there was a general feeling that the search would continue until someone was found that everyone agreed on. Anton felt that the degree of representation was not as important an issue if the committee had to reach a consensus.

Hummel Berry moved that there be at least 4 faculty representatives to the presidential search committee.

Cooney argued against the motion since he didn't think it would make any difference in the final outcome. Tinsley noted that if there were 4 faculty members on the committee then trustees would comprise less than half of the committee, which might concern them.

M/S/F That the faculty senate recommend to the trustees that there should be at least 4 faculty representatives on the search committee.

4. Should the full faculty have the opportunity to meet with presidential candidates before the final selection?

Ostrom noted that in the 1991 presidential search the faculty as a whole did not have any chance to meet the presidential candidates before the selection was finalized. He stated that this generated some controversy. Maxwell asked if there was any rationale for not having the faculty as a whole meet with final candidates. Ostrom stated that the primary reason cited is the need for confidentiality, but he noted that PLU uses a different model whereby information on the final candidates in a presidential search is publicly available.

Veseth noted that it wasn't just the faculty that didn't get to meet the final candidates; the trustees did not meet them either.

Haltom expressed his annoyance that in the previous election there was no chance for faculty to meet with candidates before the final result was announced. He urged that this concern be communicated to the board.

Lowrie argued that if the faculty selects the faculty representatives, then we should have faith in them. It would be difficult to involve the full faculty since the search is a confidential process. Veseth noted that a confidential search is important since many good candidates will not bother to apply if it is not. He further noted that there are not that many good candidates in the pool to start with and it would be a mistake to eliminate any possible candidates.

Haltom argued that bringing the full faculty into the process is important to act as a check against an insular "group think" mentality that might arise on the committee. Bartanen replied that there is a difference between "group think" and consensus. She also noted that you want to select people who will not be prone to "group think" in the first place. Wood felt that the largest responsibility for avoiding "group think" lies with the chair of the search committee. A well-run group won't be prone to this.

Cooney argued that the notion of thinking of this as a guilty/innocent type decision was a poor model. Many good candidates need to be cajoled into being candidates in the first place – they don't need the job. The most important consideration is their relationship to the board.

Tomlin suggested that Hans could ask Mr. Weyerhaeuser to at least find some way to inform faculty of what is happening so they don't feel like the decision is something just dropped out of the sky.

Wood noted that having the faculty representatives meet with faculty to talk about important characteristics in a president was a useful way to get outside input that helped to prevent "group think".

Haltom asserted that he didn't feel that it was necessary to assume a completely confidential search process. It is simply a choice to be made. He felt that it might be reasonable to expect the final 2 or 3 candidates to meet with the faculty.

Hummel-Berry suggested that it might be possible to compromise by having the finalists prepare a written statement and an appropriately edited CV made available.

Lowrie and Wood both expressed concern that by having the faculty meet the finalists the faculty might fragment into factions supporting differing candidates so that whoever was chosen would then come in with strikes against them. Wood also reiterated Veseth's earlier concern that there may be a number of good candidates who will not apply for the position if it is not a confidential search because they would not want their current employers to know that they are looking at another position.

Tullis suggested that a compromise might be to have a select group of faculty (different from those on the search committee, and representing a variety of disciplines) meet the candidates.

Ostrom suggested that we revisit this issue later, at the beginning of the academic year, to give faculty a chance to talk about this. Cooney expressed a preference for not postponing the discussion, but given the fact that the meeting was already an hour and a half long discussion began to wind down.

5. What is the appropriate timing for the election?

Ostrom presented the following election timetable based on the memo from Mr. Weyerhaeuser: Nominations begin: August 19; Nominations close: August 23; Ballot distributed: August 26; Ballots returned: September 2.

Holland opined that the final election shouldn't be held until the first full week of classes. Hummel-Berry agreed that the final election should not be held until after faculty are back. Haltom noted that faculty are supposed to be back one week before classes start.

Cooney noted that we might need more time than the schedule proposed above in order to accommodate a primary. Anton noted that information could start flowing from faculty to the search consultant or search firm even before the search committee is selected. Veseth argued that the committee needs to be selected in a timely manner since one of their first duties is to draft a position announcement.

Ostrom proposed a timetable for the election (including a primary) that would be completed by the end of the second week of classes. This is a later than what was requested by the trustees, but might still be acceptable.

6. A few closing statements.

Bartanen stressed the importance of having a meeting early in the fall that would let the faculty representatives on the search committee learn what issues were important to faculty.

Haltom suggested that we should start a discussion over the summer by establishing a webboard discussion list that would be accessible to all interested parties (faculty, staff, students, trustees). This might serve as a good way to prepare for meetings in the fall since it will provide an opportunity to sharpen views on various aspects of the presidential selection process.

Veseth noted that in the upcoming discussions it is important to think about what it is that we want to tell potential candidates about UPS and what it is we are looking for from the new president.

Cooney noted that the new board chair, Deanna Oppenheimer is the first board chair that is an alumna. In addition, a majority of the board are now UPS graduates. This represents a fairly significant shift in the board. He noted that because of their backgrounds as students here, these board members have a good feel for what it is like to be a student at UPS.

Ostrom closed the meeting by noting that he will prepare a response to Weyerhaeuser's letter. He will have the Faculty Senate associate chair (Wilson), secretary (Tullis), immediate past chair (Haltom), and the minute taker (Hanson) look over the letter before sending it.

The committee adjourned around 11:35 am.

Respectfully submitted,

John Hanson