Membership

Eric S. Armbrecht (UU)
J. Gary Bledsoe (PC)
Scott Duellman (JCSB)
Louise H. Flick (CPHSJ)
Q. John Fu (CPHSJ)
Rebecca C. Hyde (UL)
Mark M. Knuepfer (EC Liaison and Co-Chair)
Cathy W. Koetting (SON)
Irma Kuljanishvili (A&S)
Gregory T. Marks (EC Liaison and Co-Chair)
Aaron N. Taylor (SOL)
Sara van den Berg (A&S)
Debra H. Zand (SOM)

Committee Charges, 2013–2014

1. Review of the Travel Policy.

2. Evaluation of the research grant processing system and funding problems.

3. Update on and implementation of evaluation of Deans.

4. Establishment of external reviews of departments and programs.

Committee Report

The Academic Affairs Committee held its first meeting of the academic year on December 18, 2013. Discussion centered on the first three charges. Concerning charge 3, the Academic Affairs Committee requested that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee suggest to Ellen F. Harshman, Vice President for Academic Affairs, that proposals that
had previously circulated in the Office of Academic Affairs for faculty evaluation of Deans be instituted. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee adopted this recommendation. Vice President Harshman had independently deliberated upon a Dean evaluation plan of this sort, and faculty evaluations of the Deans of some Schools and Colleges were solicited in Spring 2014.

The Academic Affairs Committee met again on February 20, 2014, to address charge 2. The meeting included Raymond C. Tait, Vice President for Research. The Academic Affairs Committee submitted a report containing its recommendations on research support for faculty to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on March 1, 2014. The Academic Affairs Committee co-chairs have contacted Vice President Harshman in expectation of a meeting aimed at implementing recommendations from this report.

The Academic Affairs Committee held its third meeting of the academic year on May 5, 2014. The Committee discussed charge 4, and it submitted a report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee on May 20, 2014, recommending policies for external review of departments and programs.

Charge 1 was delegated by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to Douglas R. Williams of the Executive Committee, whose work with David F. Heimburger, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, resulted in several changes to the Travel Policy, including proportional disbursement of free flight vouchers arising from the university’s contract with American Express and decentralization of the approval process for various aspects of travel, which will henceforth be handled at the Chair or Dean level rather than by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The Academic Affairs Committee was advised of a possible fifth charge regarding Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The Committee has had preliminary discussions via e-mail on this matter and has investigated whether Saint Louis University currently offers transfer credit for MOOCs and the distinction between distance-learning—currently implemented in certain units at Saint Louis University, such as the School of Nursing—and bona fide MOOCs. In preliminary discussions, Committee members raised serious concerns about academic freedom, departmental control over curriculum, student completion rates, and pedagogical efficacy of MOOCs. Nevertheless, some Committee members suggested that development of new MOOCs at Saint Louis University might be a valuable tool for education and outreach to prospective students. The Committee believes these issues warrant further investigation.
Report Concerning Research Support for Faculty

Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee

Saint Louis University

March 1, 2014

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate met with Raymond C. Tait, Vice President for Research, on February 20, 2014. We discussed progress made in supporting research activity and areas of concern. The Committee is grateful for Vice President Tait’s leadership of the Division of Research Administration. In particular, Vice President Tait averted a grave crisis by bringing the Saint Louis University research administration into compliance with regulations of federal funding agencies.

The committee agreed that some areas are problematic for faculty. With this in mind, we offer the following proposals:

1. Provide a minimum level of personnel support in each college for research activity with specific training to prepare applications and maintain support after awards are made. This will require a university-wide census of research support staff to identify faculty needs according to standards of comparable institutions. This should address the needs of faculty in the pre- and post-award periods.

2. Ensure that indirect costs are returned to faculty, departments, colleges and the Office of Research Development and Services according to the previous distribution plan without requiring a minimum $7.5 million University recovery prior to such distributions. This will reward faculty and their respective administrators for research and scholarly activity.

3. Establish a Faculty Senate advisory committee predominantly composed of faculty to work closely with the Vice President for Research
to enhance research activities on campus, recommend new initiatives and promote research activity and collaboration among faculty.

4. Reorganize research administration at the unit level, providing Schools and Colleges with sufficient grant management resources, including support for regulatory compliance, thereby enabling the Office of Research Development and Services to deal only with the most complex funding cases.

5. Include funding of the research development and support services in future strategic plans and capital campaigns.

6. Examine personnel management practices, employee retention and culture of offices within the Division of Research Administration; many suffer from understaffing, causing difficulties on the pre-awards side, in administering conflict of interest and export control requirements, and in the research technology group.

7. Address delays and inconsistencies in review of contracts from sponsors and subcontractors for research proposals.

These proposals are made to promote the research and scholarly activity of faculty. This activity lies at the heart of the mission of the University and must be unstintingly supported in University budgets.
The Academic Affairs Committee met on May 5, 2014, to address its remaining charge: external review of departments and programs. The Committee recommends that regular external reviews be conducted as an essential component of department-level assessment at Saint Louis University. The Committee believes that these reviews provide faculty and administrators with valuable information about the status, resources, and needs of each academic unit. In many departments at Saint Louis University, external review is already common practice.

The Committee suggests that each department or program be externally reviewed at least every 10 years, possibly more frequently depending on the norms of the academic field in question. The assessment process, including names of potential external reviewers, should be determined by the faculty of the department under review. A self-study should be completed prior to the external review, addressing, at a minimum, program resources, institutional support, curriculum, co-curricular offerings, space allocation, operating budgets, research productivity, and service expectations. The assessment process, including choice of external reviewers, would require approval by the Dean or comparable administrator of the department or program. While variation in approach to external review is expected given the diversity of programs at Saint Louis University and requirements of program-specific accrediting organizations, the University’s executive leadership should facilitate consistency and sharing of effective practices across programs.

The results of the external assessment should be made available to faculty.
The Committee recommends a University policy of consultation between department faculty and relevant administrators following each external review in order to implement essential recommendations. Summary plans for quality improvement resulting from the overall assessment process should be made available broadly to the University community.