

Appendix C
Five-Year Annual Review
Academic Standing Committee

Faculty Senate Committee on Committees
May 7, 2010

Interviewed: Professor Todd Palmer, Chair, Academic Standing Committee,
March 9, 2010

Interviewer: Associate Professor William E. Loges, Member, Committee on
Committees

This review of the Academic Standing Committee is submitted in accordance with the duties of the OSU Faculty Senate Committee on Committees to review each Faculty Senate committee at five-year intervals using the following criteria established by the Faculty Senate:

1. Do the Standing Rules clearly reflect the function & composition of this committee?
2. Have the committee's actions/function, as reported in the annual reports and based on consultation with the current chair and committee, been consistent with their Standing Rules?
3. Do the annual reports provide a memory of the issues this committee addressed, their activities and any outcomes?
4. What has been the role/benefit of the student members?
5. What connection is there to the University's strategic plan?
6. To what extent does the committee add value to the university and/or faculty governance?
7. If the chair believes the committee does not add value, please explain and address the question as to whether the committee should continue to exist.
8. Does this committee's work enhance OSU's commitment to diversity? If so, how?

Professor Palmer shared these criteria questions with the committee in a meeting shortly before he was interviewed. His comments to me reflect his own thoughts and those of the committee.

The Committee on Committees reports that:

1. The Standing Rules of the Academic Standing Committee, as revised in May, 2005, clearly and accurately reflect the function and composition of this committee. The Standing Rules provide broad discretion to the Academic Standing Committee, which is necessary given the nature of the work this committee does.
2. The Academic Standing Committee is satisfied that its actions, as described in its annual reports, are consistent with their Standing Rules.

3. The Academic Standing Committee is satisfied that its annual reports provide an accurate and valuable memory of its activities and outcomes. The committee provides annual reports that detail the number of students reinstated due to appeals to this committee, and breaks down these reinstatements by the grounds on which they were granted.
4. Student members provide very valuable insight into the cases brought before the Academic Standing Committee. They shed light on their contemporaries' situations and can, at times, detect implausible claims. However, Professor Palmer noted that it is difficult to retain steady student involvement on the committee. Student membership is purely voluntary (i.e., there is no ex-officio student member from ASOSU or other student body), and the committee's meetings regularly occur in the week or so just prior to a new term, when students are harder to find and quite busy.
5. This committee, by its very nature, is central to the strategic plan of any university. This committee offers students whose academic performance and standing have not met university standards to seek reinstatement. The university's commitment to providing "improvements in student learning and experience" rest both in the continued integrity of its academic standards, but also providing students an opportunity to overcome barriers they've encountered to meeting those standards so they can return to OSU as soon as they can.
6. This committee also, by its nature, represents the essence of faculty governance. Ultimately, it is the faculty on this committee that represents the shared commitment of OSU's faculty to high standards of academic accomplishment. The committee adds value to the university by showing students who have experienced barriers to meeting those standards that they are welcome here when they believe they are better prepared to succeed at OSU.
7. N/A
8. To the extent that students from populations that have not historically made up the college population encounter unexpected obstacles to succeeding at OSU, the Academic Standards Committee offers them an opportunity to appeal for early reinstatement to the university when they believe they can demonstrate preparation for success.

Other issues raised during the interview:

The process by which the committee receives petitions for reinstatement was a cause for some concern. Presently, the petitions are not received by the committee until the day it meets to hear the petition presented orally by the student. As it is, none of the material supporting a student's petition for early return to the university is received by the committee until the hearing begins. Apparently many of the petitions are prepared hastily following a suspension (e.g., a student learns he is suspended after winter grades are submitted and immediately applies to return in spring, a week later), and that might make it impractical to distribute the material earlier. There may be confidentiality rules involved as well. Nonetheless, this aspect of the committee's routine can be an obstacle to its members' satisfaction with their service.

The committee receives no follow-up information about the students they reinstate, so it's not clear to them how successful their evaluation is. Their recommendations are communicated to the Registrar, and accompanied by comments about the circumstances that would most improve the petitioner's chances of success following reinstatement. Professor Palmer noted that the committee doesn't know how widely their comments are shared beyond the Registrar's Office. For instance, if the committee believes that a student's success rests on regular meetings with an academic advisor to make sure the student is enrolling in courses appropriate to her degree plan, it's not clear if this is communicated to any academic advising office.

The Academic Standing Committee meets more frequently than most university committees (12-15 times per year, including summer), and each meeting is high stakes for the petitioners, making this a demanding committee on which to serve. Nonetheless, Professor Palmer expressed confidence that all who take part in the hearings take each case very seriously, deliberate intelligently, and come to fair decisions. The meeting schedule makes it rare that the entire committee, including student members, is present at any single meeting. Given the nature of the task and the schedule on which its decisions are needed, this may be unavoidable; Professor Palmer communicated that members can find service on this committee as daunting as it is rewarding.