

March 4, 2006
Committee on Committees
Five-Year Review of Curriculum Council

By Larry Flick, chair Science & Mathematics Education
Interviewed Marv Pyles, co-chair, Curriculum Council

This review of the Curriculum Council (CC) 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. The criteria are used as the subheadings of the report.

1. Do the Standing Rules clearly reflect the function and composition of this committee?

The work load of the CC is large and relies on complete participation of a full committee membership. Because the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Science generate the bulk of the Category II proposals, committee membership could stand to have a greater balance from these colleges. The standard operating policies of the CC have had members review proposals from their home colleges. The thinking is that the role of the CC is to thoughtfully criticize the proposals and this is best done if one is in the same college.

A major concern of this committee as expressed by co-chairs Marv Pyles and Mary Cluskey is that the structure, procedures, and authority of the CC are not sufficient for complete fulfillment of the following clauses in the Standing Rules: "implement the long-range educational mission of the University" and "bring about a suitable and rational balance of academic programs". The problem is outlined as follows. In these times of budgetary constraints, President Ray counseled all units to narrow their focus on what we do well and stop doing what can not be done as well. We can't continue to do all that we have been doing. That means when the CC receives a Category II proposal to add a course, for example, the following questions are a sample of ones that become important: Does this fulfill President Ray's charge? Is this a programmatic and fiscally responsible move to make? If this course is being added, what course is being dropped or where are the additional FTE coming from? If additional students are being attracted, what unit(s) is projected to lose students?

There is nothing in the Category II process that allows the CC to see a big enough picture to fulfill critical aspects of the CC's Standing Rules. Further, if the CC acts to hold Category II proposals to these more rigorous standards required by budgetary constraints, are there potential problems with non-tenured faculty on the CC maintaining this position with their own college colleagues? Finally, because of the vagueness of the Standing Rules and the University's strategic goals, the CC members are faced with considerable challenges of interpretation. There is nothing in the Standing Rules upon which to base a denial of a Category II. Denial comes primarily in liaison statements that challenge the proposal and that rarely happens.

The attached memo from Cluskey and Pyles to Boggess, as Faculty Senate president, (March 2, 2006) recalls their discussion of this matter and suggests a coordinated effort to communicate with faculty the intention to address this problem*.

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?

The report of 2004-2005 only serves to underscore the major concern described above. Last year the CC held 20 meetings and approved 383 Category II proposals, a slight increase from the previous year. This is a significant work load for a volunteer committee and reinforces the need for full and appropriate membership.

More importantly, the CC found that New Media Communication in the Department of Liberal Studies had apparently attempted an "end-run" around the system of course approval. They were teaching 30-45 courses that had never been approved and had enrolled about 250 students. The CC worked with relevant administration and faculty to allow the 20+ students to graduate in June 2005 with what they had been promised. However, this example raises the issue of how well the Senate, CC, and University are organized to "implement the long-range educational mission of the University" and "bring about a suitable and rational balance of academic programs".

3. Do the annual reports provide a memory of the issues this committee addressed, their activities, and any outcomes?

Given the example just described and the general outline of the more routine work of the CC contained in the reports, there appears to be adequate institutional memory.

4. What has been the role/benefit of student members?

It appears the ASOSU does not act on the issue of finding members. The suggestion of co-chair Pyles is that the colleges rotate through a process of selecting a student to nominate for positions on major committees and communicate that nomination to ASOSU for appointment. By coming through the college, these positions can be presented as the important opportunity they are for exposure to important university issues and valuable experience. The colleges are in a position to nominate students who are interested and capable of participation. This would result in greater motivation and accountability for student participation.

5. What connection is there to the University's strategic goals?

As mentioned above, there is sufficient ambiguity in these goals that they do not often help the CC in fulfilling the Standing Rules. To the extent that OSU will not change size appreciably, the goals and the programs designed to fulfill these goals amount to a zero sum game. The CC is seeking ways to operate with this bigger picture in mind in order to fulfill its charge to the Faculty Senate.

* Attachment: [Memo from Cluskey and Pyles to Boggess, March 2, 2006](#), Subject: Application of Curriculum Council standing rules.