

A Proposal for Revising the Process of Selecting  
Candidates for Faculty Senate President-Elect  
By Steve Thomas, Faculty Senate President-Elect, 2011/12

As evidenced by the efforts expended during at least the three most recent election cycles, our current process for selecting the President-Elect for the Faculty Senate is not functioning well. To be clear, we have no lack of qualified candidates. Rather, we suffer from an inability to convince these faculty members that this service will be valued within his or her academic unit. This lack of certainty is important because modifications of existing workloads will be needed to allow the faculty member to function effectively, especially during his or her year as Senate President.

Within the Senate *Bylaws* (Article II, Section E.), we find the underlining structure of the Senate defined. “Elective faculty seats shall be apportioned ... each year among the respective colleges, units, and divisions.” And later we read that the “elected members and alternates from each of these colleges, units, or divisions constitute a caucus.” [Hereafter within this document, “colleges, units, or divisions” will be referenced simply as “divisions.”] The leader of each caucus serves as a member of the Committee on Nominations and Appointments and as such should already be involved in the selection process for President-Elect candidates.

One way to assure a potential candidate of the support of his or her division is to have the division’s caucus, in consultation with the division’s dean and department heads, take a more obvious role, early during the selection process. Such collective participation should make a clear, positive statement concerning (1) the importance of the service role, (2) the belief that the faculty member is a suitable candidate, and (3) the willingness of the division to support the faculty member, if elected.

Within the above referenced section of the Senate *Bylaws*, a formula is specified for the apportionment of elected Senate seats based on FTE faculty appointments. Based on figures supplied by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the number of FTE faculty as of February 2012 ranged from 22.0 (for Architecture and Design) to 178.0 (for Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources), with the number of senate seats thus allotted ranging from two to ten for these divisions. These large differences in size suggest that some allowance should be made for smaller divisions, to insure that they are not required to assume a disproportionate burden within this process.

With these considerations as background information, the following procedure is suggested to move the initial step of selecting candidates for President-Elect of the Faculty Senate to the division level.

- (1) When the most recently reported number of FTE faculty within a division justifies **five or more senate seats**, the division shall nominate for the position of President-Elect from within the division one faculty member who fulfills the requirement outlined elsewhere in the Senate *Bylaws*. The selection of this nominee shall be made by the division’s caucus, in consultation with the division’s dean and department heads. However, if a member of the division currently serves as the President-Elect, President, or Past President of the Faculty Senate, this requirement to submit a nominee shall be waived for the current year.

- (2) When the number of FTE faculty within a division justifies **fewer than five senate seats**, the division may (but is not required to) nominate one faculty member from within the division for the position of President-Elect, using the same selection process previously outlined.
- (3) The selection of this nominee shall take place during the fall term. The caucus leader shall report the nomination to the Chair of the Committee on Nominations and Appointments no later than the second Monday in January. This nomination shall include a brief statement of the faculty member's qualifications and interests in serving in the role as President-Elect.
- (4) From the nominations received, the Committee on Nominations and Appointments shall select two candidates to present to the Senate as candidates for office of President-Elect. This selection shall take place by February 15<sup>th</sup>, the date specified within the Senate *Bylaws*.
- (5) None of these requirements prevent additional nominations for President-Elect from being made on the floor of the Senate prior to the election.

Several advantages should be seen from adopting this procedure.

- Essentially, this process clarifies the responsibilities that each caucus leader (individually and collectively as a member of the Committee on Nominations and Appointments) already has to assist in the selection of qualified candidates. What is new is the indication that the caucus leader should have the support of the entire division, including deans and department heads, in making the best selection possible.
- The nomination process will be completed in a more timely fashion. We should not have to scramble for candidates at the eleventh hour.
- Having the initial nomination made at the division level permits a more reasoned selection. The caucus members, together with the dean and department heads, have a clearer, more immediate knowledge of the abilities, qualifications, and interests of the faculty members within the division. These individuals, collectively, use such knowledge to select the most suitable nominee.
- Because the nomination comes from his or her colleagues, the dean and division department heads, the nominee should feel assured that the service will be valued and supported within the division.
- No one division is expected to bear a disproportionate share of the leadership role within the Senate. Smaller divisions may (but are not required to) submit nominees annually. Divisions already supporting the leadership of the Faculty Senate through the election of a President-Elect are not required to submit additional nominees until that individual's term of service is concluded. However, they are not prohibited from doing so.
- While this process specifically addresses the selection of nominees for President-Elect, the process of communication between the caucus members, deans, and department heads might also yield benefits in the selection of candidates to stand for election as senators representing the division.

The success of this process will hinge on the selection of the most appropriate nominee within each division. Thus, it should be clearly understood by the deans, department heads and caucus members that their best efforts are expected during each nomination cycle.