



Faculty Senate News

April 19, 2006

Fixed-term faculty, First-Year Seminars, and University-wide disciplinary communities highlight a full agenda for the University Faculty Senate's last meeting of this academic year on **April 25, 2006**. Senators and visitors should plan for a 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. meeting that will include various recognitions for student scholarship and faculty service to the University Faculty Senate. Also, the Senate will hear informational reports on efforts to create uniform course abbreviations, faculty tenure and promotion rates, and future employee health care benefits. Election results for key University and Senate committees will be announced at the end of the meeting when next year's officers are installed.

President Spanier will be in attendance to provide comments and stand for questions. If you have questions of keen interest for the president, be sure to contact one of your Senate representatives, so she or he can take this opportunity to have the University President address a specific issue.

Now here are a few details on the Senate reports. The Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs has a forensic report to discuss University policies for appointment, position, title, promotion, retention, and advancement of full-time fixed-term faculty. Approximately 43 percent of all University faculty are full-time fixed term, and their participation in the full life of the University is essential to achieve the University missions of teaching, research, and service. The online report shares relevant information related to current practice at Penn State and other comparable universities (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appb.pdf>).

The Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education is sponsoring a second forensic report on the issues surrounding the general education requirement for a first-year seminar (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appc.pdf>). The committee has wrestled with this requirement for a few years and needs the fullest possible advice from Senators to make a decision to retain the requirement and enforce its specifications, revise the requirement, or repeal the requirement and leave it up to each college to decide to offer a first-year seminar type course.

The Senate will vote on a new policy for students to resolve classroom problems unrelated to grades (for grade mediation, see [Policy 47-20](#)), or discrimination based on age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status (for harassment and discrimination, see [AD-42](#)). The new policy (20-00) provides a more effective and visible process for students to resolve classroom problems. (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appe.pdf>).

The Senate will also vote on an advisory and consultative report to the president to establish University-wide disciplinary communities through various recommended leaders and activities. The Senate Committee on Intra-University Relations has deliberated since the 2005 restructuring of the University to develop specific strategies to further construct and sustain the disciplinary connections between faculty dispersed across the entire geographic breadth of the University. Their report provides descriptions of past and current disciplinary activities, and a pathway to greater connectivity if faculty and administrators accept both the responsibility and the opportunity to collaborate in research, teaching, and service (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appf.pdf>).

The Senate Committee on Curricular Affairs will provide an update on the 48 teams of faculty from across the University who are working to reconcile different abbreviations for courses within the same specific discipline. This effort to create curricular coherence has made excellent progress this year (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/apph.pdf>).

Each year, Blannie Bowen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, presents a report to Faculty Affairs and the full Senate on the progress of faculty hired at the University in the tenure track. Currently, we have 900, or 18 percent, of faculty in provisional status. The report provides data on the percentage of faculty who achieve tenure in the categories of male, female, minority, and non-minority. This report is an important measure of our ability as a University to recruit and tenure a diverse faculty (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appi.pdf>).

The Faculty Benefits Committee is sponsoring a presentation by Billie Willits, Associate Vice-President for Human Resources, on recommendations for employee health care benefit changes. The challenges of providing excellent health care for all University employees will be with us for many years, and this report is an important opportunity to provide response to the committee and administration about the recommendations for future benefits (<http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2005-2006/apr25-06agn/appj.pdf>).

The complete agenda for the Senate meeting is posted on the Senate Web site at <http://www.senate.psu.edu/agenda/index.html> and the minutes (*The Senate Record*) will be posted approximately three weeks after the meeting. Members of the University community are invited to attend any Senate meeting, and seats are reserved for this purpose. Any member of the University community who is not a member of the Senate may request to speak on any item of business already before the Senate. Requests must be made to the Chair, through the Executive Secretary of the Senate, at least four calendar days before the Senate meeting. Senate meetings are also available through streaming video at <http://live.libraries.psu.edu>.

I encourage all University members to be involved in governance issues by attending local unit meetings, by contacting the unit's Faculty Senate representatives, and by using the University Faculty Senate Web site at <http://senate.psu.edu/>.

To learn how to submit major, minor, option or course proposals, consult the following: http://www.senate.psu.edu/curriculum_resources/guide/contents.html. Senate Curriculum Reports are available at http://www.senate.psu.edu/curriculum_resources/bluesheet/bluex.html.

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