

Feb. 26, 2018

Motion submitted by Senator Theresa McGarry: I move that the Senate issue a letter of concern on the model of the letter below. **Rationale:** The dissolution of the Classroom Utilization Committee is troubling because it is now unclear how faculty will influence control of classroom space, and on a more general level, the process whereby it was dissolved indicates a disturbing lack of transparency and disregard of shared governance principles. A response on our part is called for to show that these principles are important to us.

Statement of Concern Regarding Shared Governance and the Classroom Utilization Committee

In the spirit of increasing transparency and safeguarding the principles and mechanisms of shared governance at ETSU, the Faculty Senate intends by this statement to identify a problem area evoking serious concern and call this matter to the attention of President Noland. The issue at the heart of the matter is the recent handling of instructional space assignment, particularly with regard to the Classroom Utilization Committee (CUC).

Our understanding is that the CUC has been disbanded by the Provost. The two justifications given for this action were that the Technology Access Fee Advisory Committee's work was overlapping significantly with that of the CUC and that the Chair of the CUC indicated that the committee had not met in over a year.

The charge of the Technology Access Fee Advisory Committee, taken from <https://www.etsu.edu/its/classroom/special-projects/taf/tafcommittee.php>, is as follows.

- Advise the Provost on uses and proposed expenditures from the Technology Fee Committee.
- Solicit advice from campus constituencies.
- Report, as appropriate, its assessment of the effectiveness of the expenditures in enhancing the availability of technologies to students.

The charge of the CUC, as provided to the committee in an email from the Chair on 9/20/13, is as follows.

- Develop and recommend for review its operating policies and procedures.
- Recommend the establishment and revision of policies and procedures related to classroom utilization and course scheduling
- Review and recommend to the Provost regarding proposals to:
- Change the purpose of a classroom, either to make the space something other than a classroom or to significantly alter the nature, function, or instructional classification of the classroom
- Significantly change the seating capacity of a classroom
- Designate a classroom as "dedicated" for scheduling
- Designate a classroom as "first priority" for scheduling
- Schedule classes in time/day patterns that are non-standard
- Review issues related to the quality of instructional space, particularly those that affect the utilization of classrooms and recommend actions for improvement.
- Encourage innovation in course scheduling and the utilization of available space.

Caveat: The committee will NOT review or arbitrate disagreements about scheduling of individual classes and will not serve as an avenue for appealing administrative decisions.

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When these two charges are compared, no significant overlap is apparent. If such overlap existed in practice, we submit that an appropriate response would have been to bring the chairs of the two committees together, with other relevant people, and discuss what to change, considering alternatives such as revising the charges, asking the committees to change their practices, combining the committees, or numerous other possibilities.

Similarly, we do not find grounds for disbanding a committee in the fact of the committee's not having been convened for a year. The line of thinking seems to have been that if a committee has not been meeting, it is unimportant. However, numerous other reasons for a committee not having met when it was supposed to are possible. Similarly, we are aware that the CUC Chair expressed doubts to the Provost about the importance of the committee. This is, however, one person's opinion. Rather than eliminating a committee, a more appropriate response would have been to investigate further by, for example, talking to the committee members. The meeting between the Chair and the Provost has occasioned a significant amount of confusion and misinformation. For example, the Chair informed the committee members that "the university ha[d] a new space committee and all responsibilities for space (including classrooms) [would] belong to that committee," which has subsequently been disputed in administrative committee meetings.

Openness and clarity about governance are being seriously undermined in the handling of this situation. However, it is not only the general principle that gives rise to concern here, but also the specifics regarding this particular committee. The use of instructional space is of clear and immediate importance to the faculty of this university. The CUC was the mechanism whereby faculty influenced control of the space. As an example of its operation, in 2013 Women's Studies, despite having many minors and also some majors, had no designated or priority classroom, and the CUC was the venue in which this problem was addressed. Without the committee, it is unclear where faculty's concerns about instructional space will be addressed.

Therefore, we are asking for a response from President Noland on both a general and a specific level. How are faculty going to influence the use of classroom space in the university? Equally importantly, what explains the lack of transparency regarding the dissolution of the CUC, and how will transparency be assured in the future with regard to shared governance bodies?