

Faculty Committee Reduction

The following motion was brought to the full faculty by the Faculty Senate, and was endorsed at the regular faculty meeting of March 21, 2022.

Committee Reduction Proposal

The Academic Affairs Coordinating Council in 2016-17 charged the Faculty to reduce the number of standing committees. Under the process pursued at the time, the decision to disband a committee or not was left to the committee itself. In almost all cases, committees saw their own work as requiring the continuity of the committee. Only a single committee (Faculty Committee on Student Life) voted to disband itself. The task of reduction was therefore left substantially incomplete. The Faculty Senate is therefore asks the Faculty for a new and different mandate which gives it (the Faculty Senate) the power, after a period of consultation, to make the reductions.

Proposal

Faculty voices are an important part of college decision-making. Participating in the shared governance structure has always been vital part of faculty duties at Gustavus. In recent years, it is a common refrain from GAC faculty that there is too much service expected, especially in respect to committee work. It affects faculty teaching, scholarship, wellbeing, and the quality of service. Considering the decline in tenure lines in the last decade and the increase in the number of faculty expected to serve on elected and appointed committees, the Faculty Senate seeks the faculty’s mandate to reduce the number of faculty governance committees by at least 25%, thus reducing the demand and stress on our faculty. The senate will pilot the reduced committees during the academic year 2023-24 and will reevaluate during the spring of 2024. The work of committees that are dissolved will either be taken up by other committees, or administrative offices, or a combination of both.

Rationale

Reduced tenure lines: Gustavus has roughly 30% fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty in recent years compared to 10 years ago. There is also an average of about 21 faculty who are on sabbatical each year, reducing the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty who may be available to serve.

Academic Year	Number of Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty	Number of Faculty on Sabbatical --- whether for one semester, a full academic year or sometimes a calendar year [i.e., spring through fall semesters]
2021-2022	148	25
2020-2021	141	26
2019-2020	141	20
2018-2019	152	15
2017-2018	154	15

Academic Year	Number of Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty	Number of Faculty on Sabbatical --- whether for one semester, a full academic year or sometimes a calendar year [i.e., spring through fall semesters]
2016-2017	158	19
2015-2016	174	15
2014-2015	174	24
2013-2014	174	27
2012-2013	179	16
2011-2012	186	12

Increase in committee membership: Since a decade ago, GAC now has more committees and/or working groups, and more committees which have appointed faculty members. Examples include faculty who are serving on the President’s Council on Diversity Equity and Inclusion (PCDEI) and Indigenous Relations Working Group.

Increase in workload: In recent years, Gustavus faculty have gone through the accreditation process, as well as an overhaul in assessment. Additionally, more of our students now have mental health and other accommodation needs. Faculty spend more time than before in working out accommodation plans and are more involved as advisors and mentors, and at times, counselors. This has a disproportionate impact on BIPOC faculty and especially skews their workload.

Redundancy: Some committees are doing the work of other offices that have either been established or expanded. Some committees’ work significantly overlaps with the work of other committees. Here are a few examples:

1. The work of the Global Engagement Committee aligns closely with the work of the CICE and the Curriculum Committee.
2. The work of the Faculty Development Committee aligns closely with the work of KCEL.
3. The work of the Academic Technology Committee overlaps with GTS and AOC.
4. The function of Faculty Review Committee aligns with the function of the Personnel Committee
5. The work of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee overlaps with the work of the President’s Council on Diversity Equity and Inclusion, KCEL, and the Center for Inclusive Excellence

Best Practices: Comparing the number of elected faculty governance committees of GAC and our sister institutions, it is clear that GAC has too many elected committees (see appendices A and B).

Proposed Process

A Faculty Senate working group will examine the functions and responsibilities of each committee in the spring and summer of 2022 with the following criteria:

- The committee’s goals and functions and its alignment with the strategic plan
- The potential overlap of the committee’s goals and functions with other existing committees and/or administrative offices.

Members of the working group will hold listening sessions in the spring and early fall of 2022 from the faculty and Gustavus community.

The working group will present a proposal to the faculty senate in late fall of 2022 or early spring of 2023 (prior to committee preference form being sent out) with a proposal of reduced number of committees, and a plan for how the responsibilities of the dissolved committees will now be distributed.

The Faculty Senate will endorse, amend, or reject the proposal.

If endorsed by the Senate, the Senate will pilot the new committee structure in the 2023-2024 academic year.

During the 2023-2024 school year, there will be a suspension of the Section 1.2 (Faculty Committees) of the faculty handbook. However, the senate will exclude the suspension of section 1.2.11.c, the procedures for the Faculty Personnel Committee to ensure that the procedure regarding third year review, tenure, and promotion to full professor remain in place.

The senate will gather feedback regarding the new structure from the chairs of the committees and the faculty community in the spring of the 2023-2024 school year and will make a determination on whether the piloted committee structure should continue, disband, or become permanent.

Appendix A: Committees at Gustavus

Name of Committee	Number of Faculty on Committee
Faculty Senate	12 elected, 1 ex officio faculty
Faculty Review Committee	3 elected, currently 1 open
Curriculum Committee	9, 5 ex officio faculty
Course Approval Subcommittee	5
Academic Operations Committee	5, 1 ex officio faculty
Academic Technology Committee	5, 1 ex officio faculty
Global Engagement Committee	5
Faculty Development Committee	5 and 1 ex officio faculty
Faculty Personnel Committee	9
Third Year Review Subcommittee	6, currently 3 open
Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee	7, and 1 ex officio faculty
Total: 11	Total: 81 including ex officio faculty

These are groups that meet when there is an occasion for it, total of 4 boards, and about 16 faculty.

Honor Board	6
Grade Appeals Board	5
Academic Petition Board	2
Academic Probation Board	3

25 department chairs

12 Program chairs

3 director of special programs (FTS, Three Crowns, WAC)

Appendix B: Committees at Peer Institutions

Below are some rough data of sibling institutions.

- Counting only faculty positions
- Not counting administrator or student representative.
- Only including subcommittees if the memberships are different from the committee itself
- Not including special assignments or faculty representatives on Board of Trustees groups

St. Olaf

7 faculty elected committees

Luther College

7 faculty committee (unclear which committees are faculty elected, which ones are appointed.)

Gettysburg College

8 standing faculty committees

Amherst

26 committees, but unclear which ones are elected. The structure also includes committee that have very specific functions, such as Laser and Radiation Safety Committee, or Science Faculty Steering Committee.

Pomona College

5 elected faculty committees

Lawrence

“Committees of the Faculty of the University”

9 committees but 2 of them have one faculty member “off campus program” and

“Public Events.” They also have additional 3 committees for the conservatory of music.

Carleton, Grinnell, and Hope College
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