June 28, 2010

William Powers Jr.
President's Office
The University of Texas at Austin
Main Building 400
Mail Code G3400

Dear Bill,

I have reviewed the “Proposed Changes from the Committee on Committees Affecting Terms of Service, Term Limits, Chairs and Chairs Elects” proposal that was approved by the Faculty Council on March 22, 2010 (D 7976 – 7978). I recommend partial approval and partial disapproval of the eight proposals included in this legislation. Let me address each proposal in turn:

1. The first proposal calls for the Faculty Advisory Committee on Budgets to elect its own chair. I recommend disapproval and would continue to have the president select the chair of this committee. This is a very important committee. I believe it is important that the president be able to select a chair with demonstrated leadership and collaboration skills.

2. The second proposal calls for changing the standard terms on faculty standing committees from two to three years. It would also make members eligible for reappointment, with maximum service of six consecutive years. I recommend approval, since it will meet the perceived need for continuity of service.

3. The third proposal calls for an extension of service to a maximum of six, eight, and twelve years on committees with two, three and five year terms of service. I recommend disapproval of this proposal. Instead, I think we ought to stay with the standard limit of two terms that I recommend to you in reference to proposal two above.

4. The fourth proposal provides for limits on the number of years a committee member may serve as chair to three years on committees with three-year terms and eight years on committees with five-year terms. I recommend approval of the first rule providing for three-year chair limits for committees with three-year terms and disapproval of the second rule providing for eight years on committees with five-year terms. In general, I believe that one term of service as chair of a committee should be adequate for all committees. So I would restate the rule as providing for a maximum of one term of continuous service as chair. The current rules regarding
chair's terms vary by committee, but this proposal would extend the terms chairs could serve in many instances.

5. The fifth proposal creates a deadline for the selection of the chair elect. I recommend approval.

6. The sixth proposal would allow for chair elects to serve beyond term limits. I recommend disapproval if the chair elect's term extends their service beyond two terms. On the other hand, I would be inclined to approve the first two sentences of the proposal, which states that a chair elect whose term of service does not extend through the following academic year shall be given a one year extension to serve as chair provided that the extension would not exceed two terms.

7. The seventh proposal would allow committees to have past chairs serve an additional year. Again, I would not approve this proposal in its current form, but I would approve it with the proviso that no committee member (including past chairs) be allowed to serve beyond two continuous terms.

8. The eighth proposal seeks to clarify rules for selection of the vice chair and chair elect. I recommend approval.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide further information.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Leslie  
Executive Vice President and Provost

SWL:jmh

cc: Dr. Charles Roeckle, Deputy to the President  
Dr. Gretchen Ritter, Vice Provost  
Dr. Sue Greninger, Secretary of General Faculty and Faculty Council  
Ms. Debbie Roberts, Executive Assistant, Office of the General Faculty