A FACULTY COUNCIL PRIMER

Prepared for the University of Texas at Austin Faculty Council by Chair Linda L. Golden, 26 October 2006 (last updated: 16 May 2014.)

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Each year, we welcome new members to Faculty Council who attend meetings and serve on General Faculty standing committees as Faculty Council members. Yet we offer no “orientation” that explains what Faculty Council is and what is expected of its members. The purpose of this document is to help orient members to the nature of Faculty Council, its parts, its scope and tasks, and each member’s important role in its functioning. More detailed information can be found by navigating the sidebars and content contained on the Office of the General Faculty homepage.

Central Role of Faculty Council in Faculty Governance

Faculty governance is important at The University of Texas at Austin, an institution committed to the academic principle of shared governance. The Faculty Council (FC) is one of two governing bodies representing the faculty and the faculty’s formal role in University governance; the other is the Graduate Assembly. Non-administrative faculty who hold membership on these bodies are elected by their respective college/school colleagues or at large by the entire faculty.

What is the Faculty Council?

The Faculty Council is responsible for evaluating, monitoring, and recommending on all University of Texas at Austin undergraduate curricular changes and degree programs (the Graduate Assembly is
responsible for these functions for the graduate curriculum). Faculty Council legislation usually requires approval from the president and, as appropriate, the University of Texas System and/or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Faculty Council Executive Committee (FCEC) meets monthly on its own and also with the President and his/her administrative team to discuss pending matters of importance to the University and to try to work out any disagreements concerning legislation between the faculty and the administration. The Secretary of the Faculty Council provides a “legislative status” report at each FC meeting.

As summarized in the Rules and Regulations, the FC recommends directly to the president on such matters as the following:

- all matters of educational policy at the University, except those assigned to the Graduate Assembly,
- the procedures for involving faculty in developing educational policies for the University,
- regulations concerning student activities,
- requirements for admission, honors, and degrees granted at the University (except those governed by Graduate Assembly),
- approval of degree candidates,
- catalogue changes requiring approval by the Board of Regents (except those that Graduate Assembly governs), and
- reports of special and standing committees (including General Faculty Standing Committees), except for the Faculty Rules and Governance Committee (which formally also reports to the General Faculty).

Faculty Council Membership
(HOP 2-1110, C. Membership)

All membership and officer terms begin (and end) the first day of classes in the fall. There are several categories of FC membership:

- Elected faculty members with vote:
  - Twenty members elected by the General Faculty at large (two-year terms elected; in odd years)—apportionment is half tenured and half non-tenured at time of election.
  - Ex officio members with vote: the FC Secretary, the Graduate Assembly Chair, and, if not otherwise members, the FC Chair and Past Chair.
  - Members elected by the individual colleges and schools (the number is apportioned by the General Faculty
Secretary according to the rules).

- Administrative members *ex officio without vote*: president, executive vice president and provost, all other vice presidents, registrar, college/school deans, the dean of continuing education, director of General Libraries, dean of students, and director of admissions.
- Seven student members with vote: three from Student Government, two from the Senate of College Councils, and two from the Graduate Student Assembly.
- Two Staff Council members without vote.

**What Is Expected of You?**

Accepting elected membership on the Faculty Council means that you agree to: 1) attend monthly FC meetings to discuss and vote (2 unexcused absences in an academic year is interpreted to mean that you are vacating your seat); and 2) serve on at least one General Faculty Standing Committee. Regular FC meetings occur on a Monday at 2:15 p.m. in Main 212. The following [academic year’s schedule](#) is posted each summer by the Office of the General Faculty.

As an elected member, you are urged to keep the group you represent apprised of FC actions and issues. A great deal of information, from prior minutes to current motions on the floor, is available on the [FC website](#) that can be of great assistance in understanding your FC.

**General Faculty Standing Committees: Faculty Council’s Participation**

FC members are not the only faculty members on General Faculty Standing Committees, but they do play active roles in standing committee membership and are expected to serve on at least one. Nominations to Standing Committee membership from the Committee on Committees are from General Faculty members, who need not be FC members). The three types of General Faculty Standing Committees, are shown below:

**Type A: Faculty Affairs Committees**

A-1: Committee of Counsel on Academic Freedom and Responsibility; A-2: Faculty Advisory Committee on Budgets; A-3: Faculty Committee on Committees; A-4: Faculty Grievance Committee; A-5: Faculty Welfare Committee; A-6: General Faculty Rules and Governance Committee; A-7: University of Texas Press
Advisory Committee.

**Type B: Student Services and Activities**

B-1: Committee on Financial Aid to Students; B-2: Recreational Sports Committee; B-3: Student Life and Activities Committee.

**Type C: Institutional Policy or Governance**

C-1: Admissions and Registration Committee; C-2: University Academic Calendar Committee; C-4: Educational Policy Committee; C-5: Faculty Building Advisory Committee; C-6: International Programs and Studies Committee; C-7: University of Texas Libraries Committee; C-8: Parking and Traffic Appeals Panel; C-9: Parking and Traffic Policies Committee; C-10: Recruitment and Retention Committee; C-11: Research Policy Committee; C-12: Responsibilities, Rights, and Welfare of Graduate Student Academic Employees Committee; C-13: Information Technology Committee.

**Faculty Council Members’ Standing Committee Involvement**

After elections each spring, FC members who will be serving the following academic year are asked by the FC office to indicate the General Faculty standing committees on which they would like to serve by providing a ranking of their preferences. Guided by these preferences, the FC Chair Elect will appoint two FC members to each committee to serve for one year. These are “unfettered” appointments made by the Chair Elect and do not require anyone else’s approval.

Each spring, the Committee on Committees asks the General Faculty to nominate themselves and/or others to serve on standing committees. The Committee on Committees will send the number of nominations needed plus at least two alternates for each committee to the provost for his/her selection of standing committee members. These standing committee appointments are for two-year terms. The Faculty Council chair elect is a non-voting *ex officio* member of the Committee on Committees.

Each September, the chair of each General Faculty standing committee will convene the first meeting of the academic year. If the committee did not elect a chair during the previous academic year, the Faculty Council Chair will ask one of the members to convene the initial meeting. A date will be provided by the Faculty Council office for a meeting of all committees in Main 212, or the convener may schedule another time.
At the initial meeting, the committee will elect a chair (if it did not do so the previous year) and also a chair elect or vice chair. If the committee opts for a vice chair, then the chair elect shall be elected in the spring semester. The chair elect shall be elected no later than the last Friday in February. The committee will begin its work by having each member receive a copy of the standing committee’s function and its annual report from the previous year.

**The Faculty Council Executive Committee: Process and Focus**

A great deal of planning occurs in the Faculty Council Executive Committee (FCEC). The FCEC meets once a month to discuss matters of importance to the FC and to plan the next meeting’s agenda. The FCEC and/or the FC Chair also appoints or nominates (if the appointing person is the president or provost) faculty members to ad hoc or special committees. An example of such a body is the Committee on Undergraduate Degree Program Review (CUDPR), whose purview includes curricular and degree catalog changes.

The FCEC is comprised of the FC Chair, the FC Chair Elect, the past FC Chair, the Secretary of the FC and General Faculty, the Chair of the Graduate Assembly, and three members elected directly by the FC. With the exception of the Secretary of the FC and General Faculty, who is to be elected each fall, all members of the FCEC are elected to their positions by the FC’s voting members each spring. The FCEC announces a slate of at least two nominees for FC Chair; FC members nominate the candidates for the other 3 FCEC positions in advance of the May FC election meeting each year. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

**The Faculty Council Executive Committee "Plus"**

In addition to the monthly FCEC meeting, the FCEC meets monthly with the upper administration (FCEC+), including the president, deputy to the president, provost, vice provost, and vice president for legal affairs. This meeting agenda covers issues currently confronting the University, the upcoming FC agenda, and FCEC questions and concerns regarding previously enacted and upcoming FC legislation.

**Affiliations and Communications with Other Faculty Senates/Councils and UT System Institutions**

Our FC is a member of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, which meets in Austin for two days once each long semester. The FC Chair and Chair Elect represent UT Austin at that meeting. All member
universities and colleges from around the state that have a Faculty Senate or Council provide written and oral reports about their institutions and current issues confronting them.

The FC Chair and Chair Elect are also the UT Austin faculty members on the UT System Faculty Advisory Committee. All campuses of the UT System -- the nine universities and six medical branches -- are represented. SysFac has several two-day meetings each long semester. As with the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, the representatives of each institution make written and oral summary reports.

The FC meets annually – usually in early March -- with its Texas A&M counterpart to discuss matters of mutual interest. The meetings, which are held in alternate years at each campus (odd years in Austin and even ones at College Station), are coordinated by the Chair Elects of the 2 bodies.