

Ad Hoc Committee on Quasi-judicial University Committees
Meeting Minutes
June 7, 2001

Members Present: Don Mills, Mike Russel, Rick Barnes, Angel Fuentes (Chair, Student Organizations), Fred Oberkircher (Chair, Traffic Regulations and Appeals), Lynn Flahive (Chair, Student Organizations)

The history behind the formation of this committee was reviewed. Going back at least three years, the Faculty Senate charged the Committees on Committees (ConC) with reviewing the various university committees to see if committees could be eliminated or combined. The rationale is that some committees do a great deal of work while others do. Thus, when faculty list a University committee on their vita, it does not mean work has been done. An additional concern is that many faculty members will not volunteer to serve on committees and therefore it is difficult to fill all the needed positions. The various quasi-judicial committees (Student Conduct and Grievance, Student Organizations, and University Court) were ones that were recommended as having the potential to combine.

Don Mills explained that the Student Bill of Rights was written 25 years ago and must remain. The Bill of Rights is meant to assure that the judicial process is fair to the student. He suggested that any changes not result in the need to revise the Bill of Rights as that would be a difficult task.

Discussion ensued that looked at keeping the University Court as the appellate body and having the quasi-judicial committees serve as advisory bodies that would also look at issues of policy and procedure. This would allow for due process in that those who make the policies would not be hearing the cases. But this would also require the establishment of a hearing panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) *The University Court would remain as is. It would hear appeals of disciplinary decisions. The role of the Court is to ensure that procedures are adhered to and not to rehear the case.*
- 2) *Form a Hearing Panel Committee that would include faculty, staff, and students. The recommended number would be about 25. To form this committee, a call would go out for individuals interested in serving and willing to undergoing training. This panel would hear cases that involve student grievances including allegations of sexual discrimination or racial discrimination, as well as disciplinary offenses. Thus, special training would be a prerequisite. Mike Russel's office would coordinate this training. Additionally, this panel would be educated on Fraternity/Sorority issues, as organization cases would also go through this panel. If a hearing was needed, three individuals from the trained committee would hear a given case. The student would*

be given the right to strike a member if he/she felt a conflict could occur. Mike Russel will develop the actual guidelines with the Ad Hoc committee if the Hearing Panel Committee is approved.

- 3) *The Student Conduct and Grievance Committee and Student Organizations Committee would have their membership numbers reduced, as their purpose now would be advisory. Three faculty members would be the recommended number. These committees would also have reports from Mike Russel and Rick Barnes, respectively, at least once per semester that would give statistical information as to how many cases were dealt with and a general report of outcomes.*

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS AND APPEALS

Fred Oberkircher reported that the main concern here is that there be better communication between various university offices. The example was given that when students move in and out of the dorms, temporary parking signs are put up. Physical plant personnel, following instructions from TCU police that are given input from Dr. Mills' office place these signs. However, Traffic committee is not given any written notification of these signs, their placement and location, such that when a ticket is appealed there is no factual information for the committee to work from.

Fred indicated this past academic year (2000-2001) there were approximately 1,000 appeals (650 fall/350 spring). Of the 650 tickets given in fall, approximately 40% were written to freshmen. Of tickets appealed, less than 10% were reversed. Of the total appealed tickets, approximately 95% were issued to students.

Fred feels the committee has developed a very good working strategy to help with workload. The appeals committee meets every Wednesday from 4 –5. A schedule is circulated for committee members to sign up as they can. Hearings were held during the 15-week semester with an additional committee meeting before and after the semester, thus 17-weeks/ semester of work. Additionally, the committee meets three times semester to deal with regulation issues.

It was agreed that the possibility of having students hear student appeals, faculty hear faculty appeals, and staff hear staff appeals was not appropriate. It is felt that the system as it is functioning now works well and this allows for the students to have every opportunity. It was also noted that this year the ConC had no difficulty getting faculty to serve on this committee. So, it will be left as it.

An additional benefit of the current process is that by hearing appeals various issues of concern are brought to the Traffic committee that allows the committee to make policy recommendations. These would not be possible without the hearing process.

RECOMMENDATION

An additional faculty, staff and student member be added to the committee. Increased members will reduce the per person workload.

An additional area of concern was the area of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism and cheating. Mike Russel noted that he is receiving increasing phone calls from faculty and chairs on this. He said it is not uncommon to have two calls/week on this. He feels a faculty committee needs to study this and to look at equitable ways to deal with academic misconduct. There is a wide range of penalties for this across campus.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate charge the Academic Excellence Committee of the Senate with looking at issues of academic dishonesty and the possibility of establishing a hearing procedure that removes the responsibility of deciding a case from an individual faculty member and move that to an established and trained faculty hearing panel. If a student is charged with academic dishonesty, trained members of the panel would hear the case, determine the facts of the case and issue a sanction, if necessary.

If this committee is formed, the possibility of putting it in with the Hearing Panel should be explored.

An additional suggestion is that Mike Russel and/or Rick Barnes be invited to a Senate meeting to briefly discuss the discipline philosophy on campus.