November 6, 2007

To: Executive Committee of Academic Council

From: Dr. John Powell, Chair

Subject: Task Force II Recommendations on Administrator Review

On April 24, 2007 the Faculty Council discussed the Faculty Voice Task Force II report regarding Administrator Review. At that meeting Provost Wilcox presented a series of commitments from the President and Provost regarding the review process. A motion was passed to refer these documents and this issue to the University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA) and request that UCFA report back to Faculty Council in fall 2007.

The UCFA appreciates the enormous amount of work and effort that Task Force II put into researching and formulating its recommendations. UCFA also would like to acknowledge the thoughtful responses to these recommendations crafted by the President and Provost.

The Faculty Voice Task Force II report recommends that an Administrator Review Committee (ARC) be formed to conduct a biennial evaluation of department chairs, school directors, deans, Director of Libraries, Provost, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, and President. The evaluation would take the form of soliciting feedback from faculty reporting to the administrator via Web-based evaluation forms. The results of the feedback with the exception of written comments would be accessible online to those eligible to review that particular administrator.

The Task Force's recommendations were in response to perceived problems with the current evaluation system:

1. The President and Provost are not reviewed by the faculty;
2. The review period of five years is too long;
3. Faculty often do not find out the results of reviews in which they participate;
4. Current practice is seen as inconsistent, varying from college to college.
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The President and Provost responded with recommendations for enhancing the current processes (LAKS Faculty Voice 2_23_07.doc - attached).

The Personnel Subcommittee of UCFA examined the documents and discussed the issues addressed by Taskforce II. We also contacted the Co-Chairperson of Taskforce II concerning their deliberations leading to the recommendations.

UCFA feels that instead of implementing new procedures, the university might be better served by enhancing the current processes as suggested by the President and Provost. UCFA would like to see the President and Provost's suggestions implemented, and had additional suggestions they felt would further enhance the existing processes and address several concerns expressed by Task Force II:

1. UCFA would like to see the annual review process for MSU administrators strengthened.

2. UCFA members agreed that the current five-year review period is too long, especially because the five-year review focuses on whether a given administrator should continue in that post. Presently there is no formal mechanism for constructive feedback from faculty advisory committees to help beginning administrators better fulfill their duties. Therefore the UCFA recommends that during the middle year of the appointment term of Chairpersons and Directors (usually the third year), Deans meet with the FAC to provide and receive feedback concerning each Chairperson and Director. The committee emphasized that if the FAC chooses to collect feedback from faculty and others immediately under each Chair and Director, assurances of confidentiality will be critically important. This review will be designed to provide constructive feedback to the Chairperson or Director and will include questions suggested by the Chair or Director being reviewed.

3. The UCFA felt that the Provost should conduct a mid-period review of Deans that mirrors the one outlined above that includes feedback to the Dean and College Advisory Committee.

4. In addition to the written feedback provided in the five-year review, UCFA recommends a meeting and conversation between the administrator under review and his/her immediate superior to discuss the result of the review.
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While UCFA agreed with the goals of the Task Force II report, members felt that certain recommendations may not be the best means of achieving these goals:

1. While UCFA agreed with the goal of conducting a “bottom up” review, it was concerned about the quality of data that could be gathered from asking all faculty under a given administrator to respond and felt that such data should be handled carefully.

2. The UCFA questioned the ability of a seven-person Administrator Review Committee (ARC), because of the time and effort involved, to review administrators across the entire campus, given the large number of reviews to conduct and the extensive differences in administrative responsibilities from unit to unit.

3. The UCFA did not feel that posting results of faculty feedback, even with limited access, would be productive. The potential misinterpretation of the results was felt to be a serious concern. The committee felt that using the FAC in the case of chairpersons or directors and the CAC in the case of Deans as a vehicle to disseminate the results of the administrator review back to the faculty they represent would be a more effective means of communication.

4. The UCFA supports Task Force II recommendation that the President and Provost should receive feedback on their performance by the constituencies they serve. UCFA encourages the Board of Trustees, as part of its annual evaluation, to create a mechanism for gathering constructive feedback from a variety of sources about the President and Provost including issues such as faculty involvement in the governance process; communication with faculty; strategic planning and the direction of the university; and the overall vision for the university.

In summary, the UCFA acknowledges and appreciates the work Task Force II invested in developing their recommendations. We feel the proposed modifications to Task Force II recommendations would be more effective in addressing the deficiencies in the current evaluation system for administrators.