

# Report of the Senate Committee on Faculty and the Academic Mission (SCOF)

## General Committee Charge

The Committee oversees and advises the Executive Committee on matters relating to the University's policies and procedures concerning the academic mission, including the structure of the academic staff, the tenure system, faculty appointments and promotions, faculty research and faculty governance. In general, the Committee deals with the matters covered by the following sections of the University's *Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators*: I.E.-F., H.2., II.A.-D.

## 2013-2014 Specific Charges

1. Review and discuss Penn's course credits and AP credits for open learning in consultation with Professor Edward Rock, director of Open Course Initiatives.

In view of the rapidly changing landscape in online education, as well as in burgeoning alternative educational modalities, the Committee felt that it would be useful to get an overview of how these initiatives are being shaped at Penn. Accordingly, the Committee consulted with Professors Edward Rock (director of Open Course Initiatives, School of Law), Andrew Binns (vice provost for education, School of Arts & Sciences) and Rebecca Maynard (Graduate School of Education).

On the narrow question of Penn's course credits and AP credits for open learning, it became apparent to the Committee that the current XCAT online system is adequate for current and projected purposes. The system handles transfer credit, study abroad and advanced placement with jurisdiction over course approvals at the departmental level. Penn does not currently give course credit for Coursera courses (or other online open courses), but any request for course credit, whether the material was acquired through a traditional or through an open learning forum, can be handled within XCAT—as implemented currently, a request for course approval is generally routed through the system to a faculty member in the appropriate department teaching material closest to the subject matter of the requested course.

On the broad issue of the evolution in open learning it was clear to the Committee that the Open Learning Initiatives at Penn and elsewhere are very much in flux with rapid changes in the use of digital platforms like Coursera, on-going experiments in the use of digital content in Structured Active In-class Learning Classrooms (such as flipped classrooms) and the acquisition and analysis of data on the efficacy of these new pedagogical vehicles. The Committee feels that it is important to keep a finger on the pulse of these developments with a view to identifying best practices and cohesive approaches that make the most of the new technologies.

2. Continue to work with the vice deans of the schools as they carry forward the process of consultation with their faculties on guidelines for the rules for assignment to, promotion within and caps on the numbers within each of their faculty tracks. The Committee will be in a position to receive formal proposals after consultation with the faculty within each school and consultation with the Provost's office.

The consultative process that was begun in the previous academic year between the Committee, the Provost's office and the various schools on guidelines for appointments, promotions and caps on numbers in the various faculty tracks was carried forward and the Committee received faculty track change proposals from the School of Arts & Sciences, the School of Design, the School of Engineering & Applied Science and the four health schools.

- Faced with an increasing need to provide undergraduates in Engineering and Applied Science with more exposure to faculty with strong practice experience in targeted areas in industry and in the workplace outside academia, the School of Engineering & Applied Science requested review of a proposal to raise the limit on the number of Practice Professors in Engineering & Applied Science to ten percent of the number of Standing Faculty.

- The proposal for a track alteration from the School of Design requested a change in the designation of the post of Practice Professor in Design as a part-time position in recognition of the fact that Practice Professor appointments in Design are limited to individuals carrying on "distinguished practices in their field" and who are only available for limited teaching assignments and service at Penn.

- The most complex track change proposal came from Penn's four health schools, the School of Dental Medicine, the School of Nursing, the Perelman School of Medicine and the School of Veterinary Medicine, and dealt with proposed changes to the Clinical-Educator track. The proposal sought to clarify the responsibilities of Clinical-Educators at Penn to bring the language more in keeping with current practice, provide for oversight and transparency at the school and Provost levels and alter the proportion of Clinical-Educators as a proportion of the Standing Faculty to 50 percent in the School of Dental Medicine, 40 percent in the School of Nursing, 70 percent in the Perelman School of Medicine and 50 percent in the School of Veterinary Medicine. The proposal introduced rather substantial changes in the Clinical-Educator track and the Committee spent a significant amount of time discussing the issues and working with the health schools on clarifying and streamlining the language.

After deliberation the Committee voted to approve each of these proposals and present them to the Senate Executive Committee for ratification.

In addition, over the course of the academic year the Committee received two further track change proposals: one from the School of Arts & Sciences on the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages tracks and one from the School of Nursing on the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer tracks. The Committee has requested clarifications from the schools on these proposals.

3. Carry forward the implementation of the regular collection of data on the role of non-standing faculty in teaching of undergraduates by working with the Vice Provost for Faculty to approve specific language for an additional guideline, requesting data on non-standing faculty, to be added to the Guidelines for Requests for Faculty Track Changes.

The Committee heard from Professor Anita Allen (vice provost for faculty, School of Law) on the on-going data collection pertaining to the role of non-standing faculty in teaching of undergraduates. After a discussion of preliminary data, the Committee has asked the Provost's Office to evaluate whether it is possible to extract data on freshman courses with non-standing faculty instructors across the schools.

4. Review and discuss this Committee's general charge, as provided in the Senate Rules, and identify what you believe to be the most pressing issues facing the Faculty over the next few years. In light of your discussions, recommend to the Senate Executive Committee two or three high-priority charges for the Committee on the Faculty to undertake in academic year 2014-2015. In explaining these charges, outline any appropriate actions you suppose the Senate might conceivably take after its review.

It is the view of the Committee that two of the charges should carry over to the academic year 2014-2015.

a. The rapidly changing landscape in Open Learning and the emergence of new instructional methodologies exploiting digital content in Structured Active In-class Learning Classrooms have the potential to be hugely transformative and reshape the core mission of the faculty. SCOF should continue to monitor these developments.

b. SCOF should continue to work with the Vice Provost for Faculty on the regular collection and analysis of data on the role of non-standing faculty in teaching undergraduates. One possible outcome of a review is the crafting of explicit language for a guideline on the role of non-standing faculty in undergraduate teaching, with particular reference to freshman teaching.

## SCOF Membership 2013-2014

Nancy Hanrahan, School of Nursing  
Ron Harty, School of Veterinary Medicine  
Amy Sepinwall, Wharton School  
Mindy Schuster, Perelman School of Medicine/Infectious Diseases  
Tom Sollecito, School of Dental Medicine  
Santosh S. Venkatesh, School of Engineering and Applied Science/  
Electrical and Systems Engineering  
Jeff Winkler, School of Arts & Sciences/Chemistry  
*Ex Officio Members:*  
Dwight Jaggard, School of Engineering & Applied Science/  
Electrical & Systems Engineering, *Faculty Senate Chair*  
Claire Finkelstein, Law School, *Faculty Senate Chair-elect*