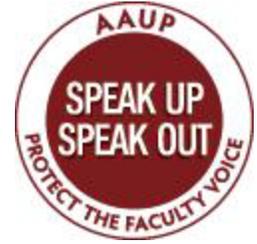


American Association of University Professors Iowa State University Chapter



Statement on the Blue Sky Taskforce in LAS

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is currently undertaking a review of how it structures its humanities and social sciences programs. While we support efforts to deal with ISU's budget problems, we are concerned that such efforts do so in a manner that fulfills the college's commitment to shared governance. Recognizing that the College and the university will continue to face diminishing state appropriations, the Dean has formed the Blue Sky Taskforce (BST). The BST, which is charged with issuing recommendations on the budget and strategic planning, is composed of faculty and some staff from each of the fifteen relevant departments. The members of the BST were hand-picked by the dean from a group of people who had volunteered to serve on such a committee.

The AAUP principles of shared governance raise some important questions about the process by which the BST was formed. From the standpoint of shared governance, the BST members do not represent the faculty. To represent the faculty the members of the task force would have to have been chosen by the faculty in the effected departments, or otherwise elected by the faculty. If new policies are to be produced to deal with the College's problems then the faculty should be appropriately involved from the start of the decision making process. That is, the faculty should be elected by other faculty and not selected by an administrator.

Currently, there is no elected faculty body whose primary purpose is to represent the faculty in planning and budgeting at the college level. The Representative Assembly has focused almost exclusively on purely academic matters. It would be a mistake simply to add budgeting and planning to the Representative Assembly's role for this year since its members were not elected for that purpose. The Budget Advisory Group is not a viable alternative to deal with these matters, as even the faculty members on that committee are not elected. Finally, the Faculty Senate deals primarily with university issues and not college issues.

The new budget model has given each college more autonomy than it had before. Important decisions that used to be made at the university level are now being made at the college level. But in spite of these changes taking place, colleges have not been diligent in ensuring that the faculty is appropriately represented in the decision making process. The committee structure in the colleges has remained largely the same and has not been adjusted to deal with a new structure of decision making that comes along with the new budget model.

There are several ways to give appropriate voice to the faculty. For example, the college could establish a body of elected faculty members specifically to engage in the ongoing planning and budgeting. The Dean could present the body with the information it needs to participate fully in the process, including appropriate details of the budget. If there are particular aspects of the budget or planning needs the Dean wishes the body to address, he is welcome to pose a question to the body. Any worry that such a process would prevent anything from being done is unfounded. The Faculty Senate works effectively with the Provost and President. A well-designed representative body at the college level can do the same.

Both the faculty and the administration will benefit by having a strong faculty voice that appropriately represents the faculty interests and judgments in budget decisions. The administration will receive better recommendations with greater faculty support. Any budget-driven reorganization plan will be more likely to win the approval of the college faculty, the Faculty Senate, the provost, and the president. It is our belief that the ISU budget process will benefit from shared governance and faculty involvement at all levels: department, college, provost and president.