TASK FORCE ON OPENNESS, TRANSPARENCY, AND CONSULTATION IN DEPARTMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Submitted to Dean Pekka Sinervo, FEBRUARY 2004
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Executive Summary

In September, 2003, Dean Pekka Sinervo appointed a Task Force to review department and faculty governance with respect to openness, transparency, and consultation in decision-making. The committee met on three occasions as well as communicated by e-mail. Chairs were asked for submissions about practices surrounding governance in their own departments, seven focus groups were conducted, all faculty members were invited to make a submission to the Task Force, and a meeting of the Women in Arts and Science Committee was specifically invited to express their views with respect to openness and consultation.

General Observations

• Transparency, openness, and consultation are not the same thing. Department members may know how decisions are made without there being an open sharing of information, and members may know the nature of decisions without having been consulted.

• There are recognized limits as to what can be transparent and what must be confidential.

• Lack of consultation can lead to low morale, particularly for those who come from universities where they are accustomed to more openness in governance. Junior faculty should not be protected completely from committee work: There needs to be a balance between involvement and protection.

• Ultimately, consultation, record-keeping, and encouragement of feelings of empowerment on the part of faculty should lessen the burdens of the Chair, by distributing the workload and smoothing department operations.

• Different departments will achieve openness and consultation in different ways. There are a variety of ways to attain the same goal.

• Different members of the same department can interpret the same practice in quite different ways.

Some Suggestions for Best Practices in Department Governance

• Effective Communication. Disseminate to all relevant individuals information that is informative, timely, and easily digestible. Information can include such things as committee membership; agendas for and summaries of meetings; records of actions taken and decisions made; department policies and constitution; department reviews; range of course loads assigned; budgetary commitments; and criteria for PTR, tenure, and promotion specific to the department or discipline. Chairs should meet with junior faculty concerning mutual expectations and should ensure that the mentoring system is working.
• **Decision-Making.** Faculty should be asked for input and the receipt and impact of this input should be acknowledged. Discussion should be encouraged at formal meetings as well as informally. Faculty should be consulted with respect to committees on which they wish to serve and committee memberships should be regularly rotated and include a cross-section of subdisciplines. Junior faculty should be involved in committee work, but a committee assignment should be chosen carefully to be particularly relevant to their interests and expertise, and not overly time-consuming. All departments would benefit from having a Committee for Equity and Environment or Gender Issues. Department meetings should be held at least once a term with agenda suggestions solicited beforehand and written material available well in advance of discussion of major issues. A written record of topics discussed and decisions taken should be made. There should be explicit statements about which groups (students, sessional appointments, etc.) can be on committees or attend department meetings. Social events that include faculty and students are important.

• **Specific Decision-Making Areas.** The PTR system should be explained to all faculty, who should also have input into the appropriate criteria for determining its allocation with respect to research, teaching, and service. The service component might be smaller for junior faculty. There should be some form of PTR committee. Faculty should be consulted about hiring priorities as well as provided with the opportunity to make their views about candidates known to the search committee. Resource allocation and workload distribution should be seen to be fair and procedures for resolution of problems should be in place and publicized. Guidelines for teaching relief should be applied consistently.

• **Constitutions and Bylaws.** Some form of constitution with a straightforward procedure for amendment is useful. Although it might be seen currently to be unnecessary, such a document can be very useful if a department at some point in the future faces problems around governance.

**Issues for Further Consideration**

Some issues needing further discussion are: 1) the possibility of modest reviews of department functioning in the middle of a Chair’s term; 2) some sort of Faculty Ombudsperson to whom department members might take concerns that cannot be resolved internally; 3) a more open process when searching for Chairs; 4) a focus on governance and openness at the Faculty level; 5) clearer guidelines for faculty who are split between departments or a department and a program; 6) governance and transparency issues as they affect staff and students as well as colleges; 7) more focus on governance and equity issues; 8) extension of the mentoring program to lecturers, senior lecturers, CLTAs, and possibly mid-career tenured faculty.
Introduction

A survey of faculty in Arts and Science, conducted in 2000-2001 (available at http://artsandscience.utoronto.ca/survey/index.html) indicated reasonable levels of satisfaction with various aspects of academic life. One striking outcome, however, was the relative lack of knowledge faculty reported having about how decisions concerning such important matters as promotion and PTR are made within departments. In response to this problem, an information web site for faculty was set up (see http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/info4faculty/).

Although this web site has been helpful in disseminating some general information about procedures in the Faculty, concerns still remain. These have been identified informally as a lack of transparency and consultation in decision-making processes that discourage collegial discussion of issues and, more broadly, involvement in departmental governance. The complaints are far from universal, but frequent enough to engender some worry. In September, 2003, in response to these concerns, Dean Pekka Sinervo appointed a Task Force to “review current governance at the department and faculty levels, with the aim of identifying general weaknesses and shortcomings in governance, identifying best practices within the Faculty, and making recommendations to address the concerns [noted above]. In particular, [to] focus on the governance of departments in such areas as hiring and promotion, annual performance evaluations, assignment of administrative positions, deliberations leading to policy decisions, and policy implementation…[to] document its findings, and make recommendations about ways of improving our formal methods of governance.” The establishment of the Task Force coincided with the Provost’s White Paper which indicated that matters relevant to transparency and consultation should be addressed in department plans to be submitted early in 2004.

Task Force members were Ted Banning (Anthropology), Miriam Diamond (Geography), Joan Grusec (Psychology, Chair) David Klausner (English and Medieval Studies), Melanie Newton (History), Paul Perron (French), Keren Rice (Linguistics), Suzanne Stevenson (Computer Science), Henry van Driel (Physics), and Sandy Welsh (Sociology). Ex-officio members were Rona Abramovitch (Director, Transitional Year Programme), Connie Guberman (Status of Women Officer), Paul McCann (Assistant Dean (Students), Faculty Secretary and Director, Human Resources, Faculty of Arts and Science), and Jan Nolan (Director of Faculty Renewal). The committee met on three occasions and communicated frequently by e-mail.

Information was collected from the following sources: All Chairs in Arts and Science were asked to make submissions describing governance procedures in their departments with respect to issues such as teaching assignments, promotion and tenure, hiring, resource allocation, and PTR. They were also asked to describe practices in their departments they believed facilitated transparency, openness, and consultation and those practices that were less facilitative of these goals. As well, they were asked to submit a copy of their department constitution if one existed. (See Appendix A for a copy of the letter given to Chairs.) Seven focus groups were conducted, with 6 to 8 people per group. Each group represented a separate constituency: pre-tenure faculty, faculty who had recently received tenure, a mixed group of pre- and post-tenure faculty, faculty who had been at the university for more than 15 years, faculty who had come to the university within the last few years from another university, CLTAs, and senior lecturers. All faculty members were e-mailed a request for submissions to the Task Force addressing the terms of its
mandate (see Appendix B for the text of the message.) A meeting of the Women Faculty in Arts and Science Committee, attended by 25 individuals, was held and views with respect to openness and consultation solicited.

Some General Observations

The Task Force assumed that the ideal model for department governance is one in which a group of faculty with a common academic interest share work and decision-making with each other and with a Chair chosen from the professorial ranks. The University of Toronto accords substantial power to Chairs with respect to decision-making, but stipulates (see Policy on Appointment of Academic Administrators, http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/acadmin.html) that they make decisions after consultation with appropriate department members (with department members including faculty, staff, and students and appropriateness determined by the nature of the decision to be made). The process should be collaborative and collegial and involves a balance between open voicing of opinions, consideration of the opinions of others, a feeling that individual opinions have been entertained seriously, and an understanding and acceptance of decisions that ultimately are made even when they may not accord with the wishes of all. Chairs are supposed to provide visionary leadership, but visionary leadership works best when Chairs begin with a position or opinion that they are prepared to defend but also to change in response to thoughtful input. In our consultations we also heard frequently that to invite input, which is necessary and required under University of Toronto governance policies, and then to ignore it, puts the system seriously at risk.

During the course of our investigation we found many examples of how the multiple goals described above are successfully achieved in the Faculty. We heard as well, however, of cases in which these multiple goals are not being achieved.

Transparency/openness vs. consultation. The Task Force was charged with suggesting best practices with respect to transparency, openness, and consultation in department governance. It quickly became evident that transparency/openness and consultation are not the same thing. (Indeed, transparency and openness also are not always the same thing: Decision-making may be transparent in that the process is clearly evident to faculty even though the decision-makers do not share information openly.) Thus we had to address two primary issues: how it is that the goal of communication can be achieved and how it is that the goal of participatory decision-making can be achieved. There is a difference between, for example, communicating to department members how PTR is administered and involving department members in decisions about the specific kinds of activities that will be rewarded for PTR and the weight that will be placed on individual components of these activities. In more general terms, there is a difference between making sure that everyone is aware of a decision that has been taken and eliciting input that bears on that decision. Both are important. But clearly one without the other is not satisfactory.

Limits to transparency and consultation. We note that there are, of course, limits to what matters of department business can be transparent and open or the object of wide consultation and what matters are confidential. This was acknowledged by all those with whom we consulted, although we heard that people are sometimes told that information is confidential when in fact it is not. Discussions in committees involved in promotion and Chair searches are confidential.
Letters of recommendation for job candidates can be seen only by members of the search committee and CVs can be circulated to the department as a whole only with permission of the candidate. But other events need not and should not be confidential. As examples, budgets, external reviews, lists of committee assignments, and decisions taken by curriculum committees should all be easily accessible and available. Unnecessary secrecy undermines collegiality and morale.

**Potential consequences of lack of consultation and involvement in department governance.** When department members are not involved in department governance some of them at least become frustrated. Morale is threatened when decisions that affect people’s daily work lives are imposed in an authoritarian manner so that they feel they have no control over events that can be extremely important to them. This may be particularly true for new faculty who come from universities where they were accustomed to consultation, participation, and decisions arrived at through voting by the whole department. When members of a department are not asked to serve on committees or to express their views in a serious way they fail to become involved in the collective enterprise and, as a result, it becomes more difficult to persuade them to take up administrative posts and perform department service when these are needed. Ultimately, when people are unhappy they become open to offers of employment elsewhere, and so the problem also becomes one of faculty retention.

Many departments protect new members by not involving them in committee work. Although the gesture was appreciated, many junior faculty in fact felt they wanted to be involved in at least one committee, and a committee whose work was of significance for the functioning of the department. This participation was an important way in which they could learn about how the department works and how to go about obtaining information, who to ask, and what is permissible to ask. As well, the department has the benefit of their knowledge and expertise which can be considerable particularly given that they have arrived recently from other institutions and other backgrounds. Ultimately, when junior faculty are not involved in department governance, they can have difficulty switching from an individualistic to a collectivistic orientation when it comes their time to serve. Needed, therefore, is a balance between involvement and protection.

**Ensuring faculty involvement should lessen the burdens of the Chair.** Many of those from whom we heard noted that they love their jobs and appreciate the opportunity to do what they want to do in a setting that provides so many challenging opportunities. Nevertheless, there is considerable concern about increasing work loads and stress brought on by student enrolment pressures and decreasing resources. These are stresses that clearly are also being experienced by Chairs in Arts and Science. One respondent noted that if transparency and consultation means the addition of rules that will constrain the power of the Chair’s job (acknowledging that the power to make significant improvements in the life of one’s department is a significant attraction of being a Chair) while thereby increasing the workload, then the Task Force’s exercise would have been counterproductive. Consultation involves time and effort. Record-keeping of the kind we suggest below (e.g., keeping minutes of meetings or at least written summaries of decisions taken, publishing lists of committee members, having a written set of guides and regulations for department governance) is also time-consuming. Overall, however, there should be a net saving in the time needed for administrative matters if a department encourages participation in governance of all its members. Chairs are ultimately responsible for the daily running of the
department, but reasonable and appropriate delegation of some responsibilities lessens the Chair’s workload and is more easily done in an atmosphere of collegiality supported by high morale. Individuals who feel empowered and responsible for the collective good of their fellow faculty, the staff, and the students and who have had participatory experience are more likely to embrace administrative work with enthusiasm and expertise. In transparent and consultative departments there are fewer complaints to take up a Chair’s time. Faculty recruitment and retention is less of a problem. Archived information makes planning exercises easier as well as making administrative transitions more efficient: Incoming Chairs and Acting Chairs have less steep learning curves if they do not have to experience a painful interim period in which they try to glean information about past decisions and practices.

One size does not fit all. Below we provide suggestions for possible best practices based on the information we have gathered over the past few months. We heard repeatedly that it is the Chair who sets the tone for the department (and who also has the power to change the culture of a department that may have become deeply entrenched over the years), and so we gathered a list of what Chairs do that can promote openness and consultation. We emphasize that the items on this list are suggestions, and that what works very well in one context may not work so well in another (although some suggestions, such as a well-functioning mentoring system, have universal applicability). Certainly there is great variation in how different departments deal with governance. For instance, departments vary in the ways in which committee members are chosen, how PTR is handled, and the ways in which major policy decisions are made. Large departments have different requirements from small departments. What appeals to one person does not always appeal to another. The challenge is to find procedures that will foster transparency, consultation, and feelings of being empowered, that will facilitate communication and participation in decision-making, that will foster collegial problem-solving, and that will ultimately ensure that the decisions that are made are perceived to be fair ones. The challenge also is to do this in a way that does not lead to information overload. Thus individual departments must determine what is the right amount and kind of information that needs to be conveyed, and find ways of making that information clearly understandable and available when it is wanted. The other challenge, of course, is to determine the most efficient ways of gathering input from its members and using this input in making decisions.

Differing perceptions: the existence of solitudes. An extension of the argument that what works well in one context may not work well in another is that even the same event can be interpreted differently by different people in the same department. We were frequently struck, for example, by the apparent disconnection between what Chairs wrote about their departments and what they saw as good practices and what at least some members of the department perceived to be the case. For example, a Chair might see a department meeting or retreat as a time when opinions were sought and information transmitted. A faculty member in that Chair’s department, on the other hand, might say he or she did not go to department meetings or retreats because individual views were not sought or that useful information was not shared or that the views of faculty members did not appear to have an impact on decision-making. It should be added that we were also struck by the fact that different faculty members in the same department sometimes saw the same events in very different ways. Again, then, there is no one specific and prescribed way to ensure achievement of the goals of openness and consultation. We can only offer general suggestions for strategies that are more likely to facilitate these outcomes.
Best Practices in Department Governance

Following is a list of best practices extracted from the various submissions we received.

1. Best Practices Related to Effective Communication

   a. Announcement of Information
   
      The importance of communication was a common theme throughout the Task Force’s deliberations. Effective communication can draw faculty together, provide a sense of investment in departmental affairs, improve decision-making processes, and increase faculty morale. Best practice involves dissemination of information that is informative, is shared on a timely basis, and is in a form that is easily digestible. It is also distributed to those groups (tenure-track faculty, lecturers, CLTAs, staff, and graduate students) for whom it is relevant.

   b. Access to Information
   
      The timely sharing of information enables faculty members to provide input to decisions. The information should be easily accessed, for example, through e-mail or by posting on a website. The department can decide on those groups that should have access to the information. A repeated comment was that effective communication entails providing information on salient points and that is easily understood since many faculty members, and particularly junior faculty, are overwhelmed with information.

      The type of information that may be accessed within a department includes committee membership; agendas and minutes of committee and departmental meetings, including action items and decisions made; departmental policies and constitution; departmental reviews (e.g., graduate program assessments, reviews conducted when a new Chair is about to be appointed); information on the range of course loads assigned; budgetary commitments (e.g., percentages dedicated to salaries, start-up packages, T.A. resources, etc.); criteria for PTR, tenure and promotion that are specific to the department.

   c. Mentorship
   
      In addition to recommending improved communication at the departmental level, many individuals commented that mentoring is a useful vehicle for communicating information at the personal level. Mentoring can be used to clarify uncertainties about departmental culture, aspects of teaching and research, the governance structure of the department, and information about PTR, tenure and promotion (where promotion includes the step towards full as well as associate professor). The Faculty of Arts and Science has a mentoring program for junior faculty which works well in some instances and not in others, depending on the individuals involved. Thus best practice indicates that mentors need to be chosen carefully and that the mentor-mentee relationship be monitored by the Chair to make sure it is working effectively. Chairs also have a direct role in the mentoring of junior faculty that can be successfully accomplished in the form of face-to-face meetings between Chairs and junior faculty about mutual expectations.

2. Best Practices Related to Participatory, Bottom-up Decision-making
a. Input into Decision-Making

Discussions in focus groups as well as many Chairs’ reports emphasized the role of clearly recognized opportunities for faculty members to contribute to the decisions made in their units. This could take the form of invitations to provide input through discussion in departmental meetings, participation in committees, or e-mail (although we note, for the record, that some Chairs have a strong preference for face-to-face input rather than input via e-mail, finding it a more satisfactory venue for the exchange of ideas). An important additional best practice is receipt by faculty of some acknowledgement of their suggestions, as well as some indication as to what influence, if any, their input had on decisions actually made. Although members of some departments are not eager to have more meetings, and some junior faculty may appreciate being protected from committee work, most respondents felt that they would be more receptive to such commitments if it was clear that their contributions had a real impact.

Finally, it appears to be useful to encourage the use of some forms of discussion outside formal meetings (e.g., through the use of e-mail), while also facilitating discussion and the circulation of alternative proposals in committees and at departmental meetings.

b. Committee Involvement

There is tremendous variation among units in the kinds of committees that exist as well as how they are established and function. Most departments seem to have a spectrum of standing committees to cover such things as undergraduate curriculum, technical services, and the graduate program, while others are more ad hoc or temporary, such as search committees. The number of standing committees ranges from practically none (in small departments) to 18, and departmental constitutions, where they exist, sometimes dictate their number and membership. Best practice suggests that having too many committees can place a burden on some department members, especially where rules constrain membership (e.g., must have both sexes represented, must be composed of full professors, etc.). Committees for Equity and Environment or Gender Issues exist in only a few departments. These are useful to address equity/diversity issues more widely and best practice suggests that their establishment should be considered in departments that do not have them (including departments that do not have gender imbalances).

With respect to the establishment of committees, faculty members are either appointed to committees by the Chair or Executive committee, asked to indicate the committees on which they would like to serve, or, in some departments, elected to at least some committees (e.g., Graduate Committee). The surveys and focus groups showed that there were higher levels of satisfaction where faculty were asked their preferences as to which committees they would like to serve on, and where committee membership regularly rotated and included a good cross-section of departmental interests or subdisciplines. Thus, in addition to taking into account faculty members’ preferences, the Chair or Executive committee would need to balance and round out allocations of committee memberships.

Many departmental committees are typically advisory to the Chair, but some respondents cited a need to feel that the committees had real decision-making power and could be proactive in consulting with department members or bringing proposals to department meetings for discussion.

Chairs and other respondents mentioned the particularly tricky balance between helping junior faculty feel engaged in the decision-making process and protecting them from being too burdened with administration. Expectations of junior faculty for what constitutes a “good
departmental citizen” are often different from those of the older generation. Some suggested that the key was to invite junior faculty to serve on committees that are especially relevant to their environment, while also mentoring them to ensure that they understood the time commitments of accepting such invitations.

c. Department Meetings

Replies from Chairs made it clear that there is a very wide range of practice across the Faculty concerning department meetings. Complaints that attendance was sparse were frequently countered by the information from focus groups, where it was suggested that this was much less likely to be the case when the department meeting involved real decision-making and not merely the dissemination of information. Best practices would strongly recommend that the department meet reasonably frequently (at the very least once a term), that suggestions for the agenda be solicited widely beforehand, and that written material be made available in advance for the discussion of major issues. There was a consensus that department meetings are an ideal setting for proactive consultation, as well as for departmental brainstorming. Since the department meeting should be a site for consultation and discussion of important topics, it is also important that minutes be taken, or that at least some written record be made of topics discussed and decisions taken. Many departments have also found departmental retreats to be very useful, especially when the department faces a decision of major importance, since they permit a focus of attention greater than at regularly scheduled meetings.

d. Representation on Committees and at Department Meetings

Discussion with focus groups made it clear that faculty appreciate representation which is as wide as is possible in individual contexts. It is also important that there be clarity in the roles of individual groups: Departments should have unequivocal statements concerning the roles of students, lecturers, staff, sessional appointments, and CLTAs on individual committees, as well as whether these groups are to be included in department meetings. If groups are to be excluded from parts of meetings (either of committees or of the department) attention should be given to an appropriate (polite) way of achieving their exclusion.

e. Community Building

Each department is a community, and therefore has a social as well as an administrative and pedagogical life. Most departments invest in their community with social events that allow faculty and students to meet on a different level from the classroom, supervision, or formal meeting. These events are important to the life of the department and should, when the department is involved in interdisciplinary or collaborative programs, include persons from related departments or faculties.


a. PTR

Discussions with focus groups made it clear that a transparent PTR system is appreciated. Chairs should explain the PTR system to new faculty, preferably at the beginning of the latters’ appointment. In some departments, the Chair regularly circulates a document to explain how PTR is evaluated. It is important to provide, on a regular basis, information about the PTR process, including how the breakdown between teaching, research, and service is determined. It
is also useful to involve faculty in the decision of what factors should be taken into account when calculating PTR. For example, some faculty suggested the need to rebalance the distribution between research, teaching and service when calculating PTR for some faculty. This is especially relevant for junior faculty and the service component. Two issues must be balanced for this group. It is important for junior faculty to have reasonable opportunities to be involved with committees in the department, yet service is not considered for tenure. To base a substantial component of a junior faculty member's yearly PTR on a factor not related to tenure forces junior faculty to make a difficult choice about how they allocate their time.

Replies from Chairs indicate that there is a wide range of practices in PTR committee structures. For example, many departments leave PTR to a small executive committee (Chair and Associate Chairs), others have a committee of senior faculty, and others have PTR committees selected from the whole department with the intention of being representative and unbiased. Some form of PTR committee is recommended. Department members should refer to the FAS Memorandum on the PTR Process (April 8, 2003), available in the Chair’s Office, for further best practices concerning PTR.

b. Hiring

Hiring is one of the most important and exciting activities of a department. It is also one of the most contentious. There is considerable variability across departments in terms of the composition of search committees. For example, a few departments allow graduate student representation, but most do not. There is also variability in terms of how hiring decisions are made and the way in which consultation is achieved.

Most faculty stressed the desire for openness in the process of hiring. This includes department-wide discussions of and decisions about hiring priorities as well as individual decisions about which candidates should be hired. Chairs and search committees should consult widely with the department about the acceptability of candidates. This may take the form of a departmental meeting to discuss candidates following the interviews or the soliciting of e-mails from faculty. Some faculty members mentioned the gap between the opportunity to offer an opinion about hiring and the decision that is made by the search committee. Although departmental input into hiring is not binding on search committees, and is complicated by the lack of access to the candidates’ letters of reference and, possibly, CVs for all faculty members, best practice means that search committees should take seriously the input of departmental members.

c. Resource Allocation and Workload Distribution

Departments need to be sensitive to transparency, consistency, fairness, and equity in resource allocation and workload distribution including teaching assignments, teaching loads, supervisory responsibilities, class sizes, and allocation of teaching assistants. There need to be clear procedures for raising questions of equity and for resolving these matters when problems arise. When teaching relief is given best practice requires that there be a standard set of guidelines for the granting of such relief and that these guidelines be applied consistently.

4. Constitutions and Bylaws as Forms of Best Practices

In response to questions about the existence of constitutions and bylaws we collected seven of these documents--five from departments, one from a multidisciplinary institute, and one
from a college. While there was much variability in style and details, we found a great deal of similarity among them in their general goals. All communicate a model of decision-making in which the Chair (or other senior administrator) is guided by the recommendations of an executive committee or “council”, as well as a set of standing committees, but with clear lines of two-way communication between each of them and the department as a whole. They mirror what we heard described elsewhere as best practice in maintaining that department meetings should be the “ultimate advisory body”, even when much of the administrative work of the department is distributed among committees that report to the Chair (or her/his advisory committee). In addition, one document explicitly noted that when the department expressed disagreement with a recommendation of the executive committee, the matter should be returned to the committee for reconsideration; another stated that when a Chair’s decision did not follow the recommendation of her/his advisory committee, she/he must provide that committee with an explanation. A set of bylaws then can serve the important function of making explicit the department’s view of the nature of the consultative process between the chair and the department.

Many focus group participants felt that a department constitution could be a source of clarification of the general operations of the department, and could serve as an important piece of “institutional memory”. Especially at times when some problematic issues are preventing department decision-making from moving forward, such a document can serve as a guideline. On the other hand, some participants expressed concern that codification of department operations can stifle needed change; this can be especially disadvantageous as our faculty grows in diversity. Best practice would suggest a means by which a constitution can evolve to meet the changing needs of a department and, indeed, all of the documents we reviewed included a clause detailing a straightforward procedure for making amendments.

Issues for Further Consideration

There were a number of issues raised during our consultations that went beyond our mandate. We list them here, however, because they all have important implications for transparency, openness, and consultation in department governance. We hope that the Dean will pursue at least some of them in the near future.

1. There was discussion in all of the focus groups about what can be done when things go wrong, if one is unhappy about a process or a decision, and so on. There was no clear agreement on what mechanisms could or should exist. However, there was a broad consensus that it would be useful to have some sort of mid-term review of department functioning so long as that review was collegial and constructive as well as requiring little paperwork. At this point we have no specific suggestion about the specifics of such a review, other than to state that it could provide helpful feedback to decision-makers that the department was on track with respect to its goals (including but not limited to transparency/openness/consultation) or that some mid-course adjustment might be in order.

2. Consistent with the idea of a mid-term review was discussion about the need for someone or some place outside the department or the Dean’s Office to go to with problems, issues, and concerns. This would involve a forum for concerns that people did not feel comfortable airing within their department or in the Dean’s office, but where approaching other officers or offices also did not seem appropriate (as it would be, for example, in the case of personal safety or
sexual harassment or violation of university policy). These concerns would be about such matters as the perceived fairness of departmental decisions, failures to understand why or how decisions were being made, feelings of marginalization, and so on. As with mentoring, such a mechanism would benefit everyone, but would likely be of particular benefit to those who are most “different” or likely to be marginalized. There was very little discussion of what the appropriate mechanism might be although one thought was that the role of Faculty Ombudsperson could be established and that it could be taken on by an emeritus professor.

3. There was considerable concern about the way in which Chairs are selected. While there is a general understanding that the process requires a degree of confidentiality, there was discussion about the desirability of a more open process than currently exists.

4. In accordance with the mandate of the Task Force, most of the discussions focused on departmental governance and the role of department Chairs. However, there is need for discussion and more clarity with respect to the role and power of the Dean and of governance at the level of the Faculty.

5. Faculty members with appointments that are split between departments or between a department and a program expressed the need for more clarity. There is often confusion about the role the faculty member is expected to play in each department/program, as well as confusion about the role of each department/program in decisions involving PTR, tenure, promotion, and so on.

6. The Task Force focused almost exclusively on faculty in Arts and Science departments. Governance and transparency issues are equally important for administrative staff and students as well as faculty associated with colleges, and should be the object of discussion in the near future.

7. While equity issues were often part of the discussion, they were not a particular focus of discussion. There is a clear intersection between equity, inclusion, the role of minority faculty, and governance. This intersection needs to be discussed and addressed more fully.

8. Consideration should be given to suggestions that mentoring might extend beyond junior tenure-stream faculty to lecturers, CLTAs, and even mid-career tenured faculty and senior lecturers.
Appendix A

Letter given to Chairs on October 24, 2003.

Pekka Sinervo has recently struck a Task Force on Best Practices in Department and Faculty Governance to examine issues of transparency and consultation in decision-making, particularly as they pertain to faculty, and to put together a set of best practices on decision-making. The committee met recently and decided that the first step in the process should be broad consultation with chairs and faculty. I am therefore writing to you as chair of your department to ask for some information.

Here are three questions for which we need your answer. They are:
1. How are important decisions that affect faculty made in your department (e.g., hiring, tenure, PTR, committee assignments, space allocation, teaching loads and teaching assignments)? This is a broad question, perhaps addressed by talking about department committee structures, department meetings (frequency, who is invited to attend, keeping of records), what avenues there are for individuals to express concerns or offer suggestions, what form departmental consultation takes in the case of important decisions such as faculty hiring and complement planning.
2. Please provide examples of procedures involving faculty governance that you use that seem to work well and those you use that seem to work less well, with comments about why each works or doesn’t work.
3. Does your department have a constitution? If so, would you please send a copy by e-mail or campus mail to Joan Grusec, Department of Psychology.

We appreciate your taking the time to think about these matters. We note that the Provost’s white paper indicates that academic plans will address governance processes, so we are simply asking you to begin your thinking on the topic a bit earlier than you might otherwise have done. Moreover, we hope that our report, due early in December, will offer some observations that might be of help in your formal planning.

Would you please respond by October 31 or earlier, to grusec@psych.utoronto.ca. We apologize for the quick turnaround time, but we are supposed to submit our report in early December. Please accept our appreciation for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,
Joan Grusec (Chair), Ted Banning, Miriam Diamond, David Klausner, Melanie Newton, Paul Perron, Keren Rice, Suzanne Stevenson, Henry Van Driel, Sandy Welsh (task force members), Connie Guberman, Jan Nolan, Paul McCann (ex officio)
Call for submissions

Pekka Sinervo (Interim Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science) has recently struck a Task Force on Best Practices in Department and Faculty Governance, to examine issues of transparency and consultation in decision-making (particularly as they pertain to faculty), and to put together a set of best practices on decision-making. The committee needs input from faculty and I am writing to invite submissions relevant to its mandate. Broadly speaking, we are addressing issues such as openness with respect to decision-making in the areas of hiring, tenure, PTR, committee assignments, space allocation, teaching loads, teaching assignments, etc., as well as seeking examples of procedures involving faculty governance that seem to work well and others that seem to work less well.

Your input into this process is extremely important and we hope you will find time to share your thoughts with us. Please send submissions either to me (Joan Grusec, Department of Psychology, grusec@psych.utoronto.ca) or to any member of the committee. We ask that you do this by November 14.

Joan Grusec (Chair)

Committee Members:
Ted Bannining (Anthropology), Miriam Diamond (Geography), David Klausner ((English), Melanie Newton (History), Paul Perron (French), Keren Rice (Linguistics), Suzanne Stevenson (Computer Science), Henry Van Driel (Physics), Sandy Welsh (Sociology)
Appendix C

CONTENTS OF CONSTITUTIONS/BYLAWS

Although every department has its own style of governance, best practice suggests a document that codifies a view of participatory decision-making in which the Chair and a set of committees share information with department members, actively solicit input from them, and communicate to them the resulting decisions/recommendations, allowing for further discussion and modifications.

The constitutions/bylaws we reviewed generally cover the following areas:

- A statement of purpose of the document. A useful component of this set of introductory remarks can be a general overview of department functioning.
- A list of department officers (such as the Chair, Vice Chair, Associate Chairs, etc.), with a clear statement of their responsibilities. In a number of cases, constitutions take the wording for the Chair’s responsibilities from the Policy on Appointment of Academic Administrators, and expand on it within the context of their department.
- A statement defining who are department members, and sometimes defining the various constituencies of a department. These are useful in later references, such as who can serve on committees or vote at department meetings.
- A description of standing committees (including ones such as hiring, that may not meet each year), along with a provision for ad hoc committees. The information for each standing committee includes its mandate, who it reports to (Chair, executive committee/department council, or department), the composition of the committee,\(^1\) how members are elected or appointed, and terms of office. Also included is a statement of the mechanisms by which department members can have input into committee deliberations, and by which committees present their recommendations to the department.
- An overview of department meetings: a minimum number to be held each year, who can call them (the Chair, or a certain number of faculty), who can attend (see footnote 1), what is a quorum, how questions are decided (e.g., by majority vote), and a reference to rules of order to be followed (Robert’s or Bourinot’s).
- General policies and procedures for all meetings (committee and department) were interspersed in the topics above, but included these guidelines: a definition of voting membership (especially important for department meetings); a requirement that agendas be circulated in advance, minutes taken, and summaries circulated to all department members; and a statement that meetings are open (unless of an obviously sensitive nature, such as PTR or promotion), with provision for holding closed meetings as needed.

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\(^1\) Constitutions precisely detail the allowable participation on a committee, or at a department meeting. Factors taken into account included: for faculty — appointment type (tenure-stream, lecturer, CLTA), rank, full-time/part-time; for staff — rank, full-time/part-time; for students — graduate or undergraduate, program of study. (Student representation was set at either a small, fixed number or a percentage of faculty participation.) For all three constituencies, tri-campus representation may need to be addressed.
- A provision for amendments to the bylaws/constitution, usually requiring a 2/3 majority of voting members present at a department meeting.