## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .............................................. 3

Introduction .................................................... 5

Identified Concerns ............................................ 6

Recommendations
   Recommendations Regarding Changes in Governance Structure ........... 8
   Recommendations Regarding Increased Involvement in Governance Activities ........................................... 10
   Recommendations Regarding Consultation Outside the New Council .... 11
   Recommendations Regarding Increasing Knowledge About and Hence Involvement With Governance .............. 12
   Recommendation With Regard to CCPAD ........................................... 12

Dissenting Opinion ............................................. 13

Appendix ......................................................... 14
Executive Summary

The Task Force on Governance in the Faculty of Arts and Science was asked to identify strengths and weaknesses in the current governance structures and procedures and to make recommendations to address these shortcomings. Members of the task force began their work in September, 2004, and identified a number of problems areas. These were:

1. The major governing bodies (General Committee and Faculty Council) are not working well. Meetings are attended primarily by administrators and a quorum is rarely achieved. There are complaints that little of substance appears on the agenda, although attempts have been made this past year to provide a more interesting agenda.
2. Too many faculty, administrative staff, and students know very little about faculty governance or how to become involved.
3. There is little opportunity for input from faculty, administrative staff, and students.
4. The existence of the Council of Chairs, Principals, and Academic Directors, an informal body that meets frequently with the Dean, has taken over much of the policy-making of the faculty.
5. The important distinction between “governance” and “administration” has become blurred.

A number of recommendations were made to address these problems. Not all these recommendations had the unanimous support of the task force, and the minority dissenting opinion is summarized below.

It was recommended that:

1. The Faculty Council and its General Committee be disbanded and replaced by a smaller group of predominantly elected members. Administrators would be non-voting members.
2. There be a referendum procedure if a sufficient number of Faculty members wished to bring forth matters not dealt with adequately by the new Council.
3. The Committee on Academic Standards be disbanded and its functions taken over by the new Council.
4. The present Steering and Striking Committee be replaced by a smaller Agenda Committee, and the Agenda Committee be authorized to function as an Executive Committee when the Council cannot feasibly meet.
5. The present practice with respect to the composition and conduct of Curriculum Committees be formalized in the Constitution.
6. Membership of all committees of the new Council be approved by the Council itself.
7. A process for dealing with the place of new centers and programs in governance be devised.
8. All Chairs be reminded at the beginning of the academic year that their department needs to elect a representative to the new Council.
9. Elections for staff and student positions on the new Council be conducted by the Faculty Office, and that two students be added to the Committee on Standing.
10. There be significant business on the Council meetings agendas with sufficient time allotted for discussion.
11. Refreshments be served at Council meetings.
12. There be a regularly scheduled semi-annual town hall forum for all members of the Faculty in which the Dean takes advice.
13. The position of Faculty Liaison Officer be established to act as an informal conduit between individual Faculty members and the Dean’s Office.
14. The Dean establish a direct e-mail connection with each faculty member.
15. Schedules and agendas of all Council meetings be e-mailed to all members of the Faculty with an invitation to attend and speak at the discretion of the Chair.
16. An informal description of governance in the Faculty be posted on the Arts and Science website.
17. The Council of Chairs, Principals, and Academic Directors continue to operate as it presently does.

In spite of efforts to achieve consensus, not all members of the task force supported all recommendations. Thus a minority of members expressed their belief that the proposed restructuring would decrease rather than increase the level of involvement, given the substantial reduction in size of the governing body and the abolition of a body where all members of the Faculty could have a say. They also felt the distinction between administrators and faculty members was unwarranted, given that administrators come from the ranks of the regular faculty and therefore have exactly the same concerns and outlook.
Introduction

In February, 2004, a Task Force on Department Governance presented its report to Dean Pekka Sinervo. The report included a series of recommendations about best practice with respect to making decisions within departments in a way that was transparent, open, and consultative. The report has been widely disseminated and has led to changes in some departments in the manner in which they are governed. (The report can be accessed at http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/resources/pdfs/stepping/openess.pdf).

The Task Force on Department Governance did not go beyond its mandate and talk about governance at the Faculty level. Nevertheless, some of its discussions about the importance of members of units knowing how decisions were made, knowing the information that went into the making of those decisions, and feeling that they had been adequately consulted were relevant to governance at this level. Dean Sinervo had also become concerned with Faculty governance and whether or not it was working in an optimal way. Accordingly, he appointed a Task Force on Faculty Governance in the late summer of 2004, with the following mandate:

“The Task Force will review current governance structures and procedures at the Faculty level, with the aim of identifying strengths as well as weaknesses and shortcomings and make recommendations to address these shortcomings. In particular, it will focus on governance in areas such as committee structures in the Faculty and other forms of participation by faculty members in the consultative process. It will assess the mechanisms by which the dean, vice-deans, chairs, principals, academic directors, and senior administrative staff consult and exchange information and propose best practices for ensuring that decisions in the Faculty are taken in a way that is transparent, open, and appropriately consultative.”

Task Force members were:
Joan Grusec (faculty, Psychology), Chair
Ted Banning (faculty, Anthropology)
Paul Bretscher (full-time undergraduate student)
Murphy Browne (part-time undergraduate student)
Joe Boyle (faculty, Philosophy)
David Cameron (Vice-Dean), replaced by Sue Howson (Vice-Dean)
Tamara El-Hoss (graduate student)
Jeffrey Kopstein (faculty, Political Science)
Diane Massam (faculty, Linguistics)
Mariel O’Neil-Karch (Principal, Woodsworth College)
Paul McCann (administrative staff)
Berry Smith (faculty, Zoology)
Suzanne Stevenson (faculty, Computer Science)

The Committee met on four occasions between September and April. In addition there were meetings of subgroups of the task force, as well as frequent communication by e-mail. Submissions were requested from all faculty members (using the library’s e-mail address list) and a meeting of the Women in Arts and Science Committee was devoted to
a discussion of Faculty governance. Finally, the web was searched for information about governance at other Canadian universities, and specific information about governance procedures solicited from colleagues at other Canadian universities. In fact, no strikingly successful models came to our attention.

Identified Concerns

We identified several concerns with respect to governance in the Faculty. Each is briefly discussed.

1. The major governing bodies—the General Committee and Faculty Council—do not seem to be working optimally. Attendance at meetings is sparse and most of those who do attend are Faculty administrators. The quorum of 60 members is rarely achieved. The following table quantifies this statement with respect to attendance at meetings of the two bodies during 2004-05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Voting Members, Administrators</th>
<th>Other Voting Members</th>
<th>Total Voting Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>December 6/04</td>
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<tr>
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<td>March 7/05</td>
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<td>April 4/05*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Meeting of Faculty Council and General Committee so all faculty in attendance eligible to vote

In addition, although the official membership of the General Committee is 179, in fact it is in reality less than this because one person sometimes occupies two positions (e.g., a faculty member appointed to a Curriculum Committee may also be the elected member from a department).

Members of the General Committee suggest there is frequently little of substance on meeting agendas (although efforts have been made this past year to change that situation). Most of the decision-making goes on in other settings, and General Committee and Council seem to be little more than “rubber-stamp” bodies. Certainly one would hope that most debate had occurred before items reached the level of General Committee and that, as a matter of course, most issues would be approved with only moderate amounts of discussion. Nevertheless it does not seem untoward that there should on occasion be some level of excitement and vigorous discussion.

2. Too many faculty, administrative staff, and students in Arts and Science know little about faculty governance and have little idea of how to find out or to become involved. Although aware of existing problems, they do not know how to address them. One
example we heard had to do with the recent planning process in which departments were asked for input but where faculty members felt there was little feedback and little understanding of how decisions with regard to planning had been made. Another example had to do with the imposition of a graduate student cap, a decision that appeared to have come from above with no apparent mechanism for feedback. There was also concern with what appear to arbitrary exceptions to stated policy. Some people suggested that administrators are divorced from the ranks of research and teaching and that they set policy from above without having to live with its consequences. Others were concerned with the opaque process of selection of people to serve on various committees appointed by the Dean or by the General Committee. We hasten to add that these are impressions and perceptions shared by some but certainly not all Faculty members. We also hasten to add that they are by and large not accurate perceptions of reality. Nevertheless, it is disturbing that even a small subset of Faculty members feel this way.

3. In reality, there is probably little opportunity for faculty, administrative staff, or students who are not on General Committee or one of its subcommittees to have input into decisions that affect their daily lives. Again, there may be more opportunity than some people believe—not infrequently, for example, we encountered lack of awareness of Council meetings where all faculty have voting rights.

4. Though it has been amended frequently, the governance structure of FAS largely dates back to 1971. In spite of our observations above, much of it does work well and the business of the faculty—curriculum, policies, etc.—is accomplished. In recent years, however, a new body has taken over much of the policy-making of the Faculty—the Council of Chairs, Principals, and Academic Directors (CCPAD). This is an informal group that meets on a monthly basis to be informed by and to advise the Dean. This Council works very well. Meetings are attended by all those who are eligible to participate and they are generally viewed as a very successful way of dealing with Faculty matters. This informal and successful mechanism, however, makes it even more difficult for significant activity to occur at the level of the General Committee and Council.

5. Because of many of the developments described above (the success of CCPAD, sparse attendance at meetings of the General Committee and Council where a substantial portion of the attendees are administrators—the Dean, Vice-Deans, Chairs), the distinction between “governance” and “administration” has become somewhat blurred. We agreed with many that governance at the Faculty level should be concerned with making judgments concerning broad policy matters and with monitoring the actions of the Faculty’s administration. (See the University’s Governing Council “Report of the Chairman’s Advisory Committee on Governance”, 1978, which sets this out as the most important principle guiding the activities of Governing Council.) Good governance ensures that the actions of the administration are consistent with the overall goals of the Faculty and the interests of its constituent members (faculty, students, and administrative staff). The administration (Deans, Chairs, Principals, Directors) is responsible for fiscal and personnel management, for the implementation of policy, for overall planning, and for proposing changes to policy. For governance to be done well it must be effective,
efficient, and have appropriate participation from all estates, and be sufficiently “at arm’s length” from administration. The Council of the Faculty, supported by its committees, provides a structure for accountability within the Faculty. We agreed with those who suggested that such a structure is essential to the good working of the Faculty, but that the present structure needs modifying to improve its relevance to members of the faculty and its independence from administration. If meetings are attended poorly and primarily by administrators, and faculty members generally are unaware of the workings of governance, it is failing in its function.

**Recommendations**

Our recommendations are designed to address the problems raised above. They fall into four categories involving: changes in the actual structure of governance, suggestions for making meetings of the governing body more involving, proposals for greater consultation of members of the Faculty in general, and provisions for ensuring greater knowledge of governance by Faculty members. In all cases we are concerned with promoting greater transparency, openness, and consultation in the making of decisions. Not all these recommendations were supported by all members of the task force, and their dissenting views are described below.

**A. Recommendations Regarding Changes in Governance Structure**

We recommend that:

1. **The present Faculty Council and its General Committee be disbanded and replaced by a smaller representative group whose voting members would be predominantly elected. Meetings would be open to all members of the Faculty (faculty, staff, and students) who could speak with permission of the Chair, although they would have no vote. A quorum would constitute 25 voting members.**

   This new Council would not be dominated by Faculty and departmental officers (Vice-Deans, Chairs, etc.) but would consist of elected representatives of the faculty, administrative staff, and students (see Appendix A for its proposed composition and the proposal that administrative members would be non-voting). In this way the distinction between governance and administration would be preserved. Members of the new and smaller Council would be aware of the importance of their attendance and participation, given that the new Council would be the supreme body for Faculty governance, retaining the responsibilities of the former Council and its General Committee and having the same terms of reference as the present Council’s. The new Council would meet in October, November, December, February, March, and April.

2. **A Faculty-wide referendum be an option for appropriate matters. This referendum could be initiated by agreement of at least 10% of appointed faculty. In order to make the results of the referendum binding at least 33% of appointed faculty should have voted. The referendum would pass if supported by more than 50% of voters.**
The present Council whose abolition we have recommended includes all faculty, students who are members of the General Committee, and administrative staff who are ex officio members of the General Committee, and thereby provides an opportunity for a review of the actions of the smaller General Committee. There needs to be some provision for this important element of “direct democracy” (which we note holds only for faculty), and provision for referenda fulfills this need.

3. **The Committee on Academic Standards be disbanded, and its functions revert to the new Council.**

The present Committee on Academic Standards is composed entirely of non-elected members of Council (Chairs, Principals, and three Directors). Its primary responsibility is to oversee the work of the curriculum committees, approving changes to courses and programs of study. It also “interprets policy regarding evaluation in the case of individual courses”. In practice, it spends much time on the details of course and program proposals, debating matters such as requests for exemption from final examinations. It also “receives and approves reports of the Committee on Admissions and the Committee on Standing”. In a practical sense the Committee works well in its oversight of curriculum details, but the fact that it is composed of unelected academic administrators and has no student representation makes it less attractive from a philosophical/governance perspective. Moving its responsibilities to the new Council would add an important new element to that body’s activities. Discussion and voting on proposed curricular changes would be of interest to all and, given that the new Council’s meetings would be open, departmental and program representatives would be expected to be present to defend significant changes to their curriculum.

4. **The present Steering and Striking Committee be replaced by an Agenda Committee comprised of the Chair and Vice-chair of the new Council, the Dean, the president of ASSU, and 3 other members elected by the Council from its members. The Agenda Committee would also be authorized to function as an Executive Committee.**

The Agenda Committee may accept suggestions from any member of the Faculty and, at its own discretion, put them on the agenda. However, any group of 25 members of the teaching staff of the Faculty and/or administrative or student members of Council may require that an item be put on the agenda by presenting a petition of the Agenda Committee. Among the items that can be brought forth in this way are resolutions for referenda. The Agenda Committee’s ability to function as an Executive Committee will ensure the effective functioning of the Council when it is not feasible for the latter to meet.

5. **The Curriculum Committees continue to be standing committees of the General Committee and continue with their present responsibilities, but their membership be modified to include the appropriate Chairs, Directors, and Principals or their designates plus 9 students elected to each committee. At the close of the Committee’s work the Chair or Chairs will decide whether to**
have a joint meeting of all or some of the various committees to consider curricular matters of broad Faculty-wide importance.

Our recommended modification reflects current practice where the effective membership of the Curriculum Committees has come to be mostly Chairs, Associate Chairs for Undergraduate Affairs, Program Directors, and Principals or Registrars, rather than elected faculty members described in the Constitution. Given our recommendation that the “governance” oversight of curriculum be done at the Faculty level by the new Council including its elected members, present practice seems to be appropriate and should be formalized in the Constitution.

6. Membership of all committees of the new Council be approved by the Council itself.

Presently, committee membership is approved by the Steering and Striking Committee which we have recommended be replaced by a much smaller Agenda Committee. It seems appropriate that the larger Council take on this responsibility.

7. A process for the review of committees and committee composition, and an automatic mechanism for adding/removing center/program directors, be instituted as the number of centers associated with the Faculty increase (or decrease) and responsibilities with respect to graduate education increase.

FAS is in the midst of a period of significant expansion and the governance structure needs to be flexible enough to take this expansion into account. Additional representation from new academic units will be required as well, for example, as the addition of a Curriculum Committee for graduate education.

B. Recommendations Regarding Increased Involvement in Governance Activities

We recommend that:

8. At the beginning of the academic year all Chairs be sent an e-mail reminding them that their department needs to elect a representative to the new Council.

Representatives may in fact not be elected but may volunteer or may be appointed by the Chair.

9. Elections for staff and student positions on the new Council and its subcommittees be conducted by the Faculty Office. Two students be added to the Committee on Standing which presently has none.

The assignment of this responsibility to the Faculty Office will ensure that staff and students are represented on the new Council as well as on its subcommittees, including the Curriculum Committees, Academic Appeals Board, and Committee on Standing.

10. The Agenda Committee ensure that significant items of business appear on the meeting agendas and that there be sufficient time allotted for the discussion of these items.
The additional responsibilities of the new Council, including oversight of the curriculum, should add to the interest level of its work. As graduate student matters are increasingly taken over by FAS, these should also increase the interest and involvement of faculty whose research programs are very much tied to the graduate students and their training. Although good management means that most items of business brought to the new Council will have received sufficient attention so that motions are not contentious, there should still be room for thoughtful discussion and a final and informed consideration.

11. **Refreshments be served at Council meetings.**

**C. Recommendations Regarding Consultation Outside the New Council**

We recommend that:

12. **There be a regularly scheduled semi-annual town hall forum in which the Dean takes advice about options being deliberated and about the implementation of decisions already taken.**

   Town hall meetings provide an opportunity for all members of the Faculty (faculty, staff, students) to learn about what issues are of current concern to the administration and, most importantly, to be consulted about these issues. Particularly given the small size of the new Council and the abolition of a body of the whole (the old Council), there clearly needs to be a venue by which the constituency can express its views. The suggestion is not for a decanal accounting but an opportunity for input from members of the Faculty. This will provide useful information for decanal decision-making and implementation as well as provide members with a sense of appropriately cooperating in the administration of the Faculty. The establishment of a town hall forum does not replace reporting from the Dean to the new Council which is a necessity both for informing Council members and for accountability. Although the Dean will set the agenda for the town hall meetings, items for discussion should be elicited from Faculty members prior to the meeting.

13. **The position of Faculty Liaison Officer be established.** The incumbent could be a senior or possibly emeritus/a faculty member who has had experience in academic administration and who would act as a two-way conduit between individual Faculty members and the Dean’s Office, conveying concerns and suggestions to the Dean’s Office, and explaining and interpreting decanal and Faculty policy and procedures to Faculty members. To ensure appropriate neutrality, the incumbent would not be part of the Dean’s or Faculty Office, but would be recommended by the Agenda Committee and appointed by the new Council.

   Although the town hall forum allows the opportunity for some understanding of procedures and for consultation, it might not always be an appropriate or comfortable mechanism for some individuals and their concerns. Individuals may be reluctant to speak up in a group or may feel that their concern is better dealt with on an individual basis. We feel strongly that the liaison officer should not be from the Dean’s Office
because this introduces a degree of formality into the exchange that Faculty members might not wish: Once someone makes an appointment to see a Vice-Dean or Dean the Chair of the department has been circumvented, an indication of dissatisfaction the individual might not wish to convey. The Liaison Officer would not duplicate the activities of the University Ombudsperson who is available to help resolve personal matters but is not meant to assist with broader issues.

14. **The Dean establish e-mail connection directly with each faculty member rather than relying on Chairs to transmit messages.** Although the Chairs do their best to act as relayers of information this is not the most efficient method of communication. Direct messages from the Dean contribute to breaking down the barriers between the Dean’s Office and regular faculty members. We recognize that Deans may wish to do their business through Chairs who have been selected as links between departments and the Dean’s Office but feel that reasonable levels of exchange between Deans and the rank and file are conducive to effective governance and administration.

**D. Recommendations Regarding Increasing Knowledge About and Hence Involvement With Governance**

We recommend that:

15. **Schedules of meetings and agendas of meetings of the new Council be e-mailed to all Faculty members along with an invitation to attend these meetings. They should be reminded that they are welcome to attend meetings and may speak at the discretion of the Chair of Council. Supporting documentation should be available on the web.** Notifications of meetings should help to make Faculty members aware of how change is effected in FAS, and whether issues with which they are particularly concerned are under discussion.

16. **An informal description of the nature of governance in the Faculty be put on the Arts and Science website. At the beginning of each academic year the Dean send an e-mail to all Faculty members indicating the existence and location of this information.** The constitution describing governance and information about meetings and agendas are posted on the website. However, a quick and informal overview, with an eye-catching title, would help to acquaint busy people with how the system works.

**E. Recommendation With Regard to CCPAD**

We recommend that:

17. **The Council of Chairs, Principals, and Academic Directors continue to operate as it presently does.**
This informal mechanism works very well. Our recommendations with respect to changes in governance structure assume the continued existence of CCPAD.

Dissenting Opinion

A minority of the task force members expressed dissatisfaction with some of the recommendations made above, in spite of attempts to reach consensus by the group as a whole. The unanimous decision was to present their concerns in a separate section of the report. These concerns fell into two categories:

a. The proposed reduction in size of the General Committee and abolition of Council does not appropriately address the problem of lack of formal involvement of faculty, staff, and students. Instead, it appears to decrease the level of their involvement, and it is unclear how attendance or quorum problems are addressed by this change. The referendum proposal appears cumbersome and possibly likely to cause discord.

b. The task force’s document in general, and recommendations in particular, emphasize the distinction between administrators and other faculty by, for example, not giving them a vote on the new Council and disbanding the Committee on Academic Standards. This is an undesirable distinction. In the university setting, there is not a major difference between governance and administration: Administrators are faculty members who take their turn at serving the university. As well, administrators frequently are most knowledgeable about the issues under consideration and have made a formal commitment to the overall well-being of the faculty and its departments: They should not be prohibited from voting on matters they will be responsible for implementing.
Appendix: Proposed membership of the new Council

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<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Voting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>One faculty member from each department (not the Chair)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One faculty member from each college (not the Principal)</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>One faculty member from each program (not the Director)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/T student, humanities</td>
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<td>Administrative staff, including at least 1 College Registrar</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nonvoting (ex officio)</strong></td>
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<td>President of the University</td>
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