Missouri State | FACULTY SENATE

Dear colleagues:

Thank you for submitting your feedback to the Ad Hoc committee's survey! As the committee reads the comments and begins to continue its comparative study, I wanted to provide a bit more background on the group's work and explain the beginning stages of the process, so that we can maintain transparency throughout these ongoing conversations. As part of the new strategic plan, the Board of Governors included a section on "achieving meaningful gains in student and employee satisfaction" (Goal 3). Part of this goal specifically lists "strengthen shared governance" as one of its main priorities, with expanded points that say that work should be done to: "Evaluate areas of shared governance and identify opportunities"; "Evaluate the faculty's role for influencing departmental, college and university leadership selection;" and "Develop policies to support faculty autonomy and decision-making."

Over the past year, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has been discussing with President Williams the various ways that we can strengthen the practice of shared governance on campus. One particular concern that has been brought to us repeatedly by faculty in every college is the way that leadership is selected, and the voice that faculty have (or do not have) in those decisions. The idea of an elected AUL model was brought up in several of the strategic planning sessions as one possible change to consider as we look to strengthen shared governance. We have discussed this idea throughout the past year with President Williams, who has told us that he is open to having this conversation. After these discussions with the president, the charge for the Ad Hoc committee was formed. Over the summer, prior to the group beginning its work, I met individually with each of the deans to discuss this committee so that they were all aware, from the very beginning, of the conversations that would be taking place this fall, and to ask for their input and concerns up front, so that the committee could use all of their feedback as guidance for the work they will be doing. These conversations were very helpful in gathering main areas of concern, and in highlighting shared approaches and suggestions between colleges; the deans' suggestions have all been included in the materials that the committee is using to guide their evaluation process. Chair-Elect Bill Sandel and I also met with Provost Phillips over the summer to discuss this work with her and to gather her initial feedback and guidance for the committee, which was also very helpful. Our goal has been, from the beginning, to approach these conversations with transparency and a collaborative spirit, and we greatly appreciate the administration's willingness to have these discussions with us.

The charge of the committee is copied below. The survey that went out to faculty and AULs is just the first step in the process; the committee is also working on a survey of administrative assistants, and they are currently doing further research into the processes at other institutions. If the committee sees areas for improvement in our current model, they will propose any alterations alongside a report of their findings in the January session (for a vote in February).

It is important for us to acknowledge that not all faculty will agree on what an ideal model of governance looks like; we hope that by having these conversations in as open and transparent a way as possible, we can host a respectful, meaningful dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of our current system, and share what we have learned through a study of our benchmark institutions.

Thank you for participating in this conversation, and please feel free to reach out to the committee or to me directly with any further ideas, concerns, or thoughts. We value your input, and the committee will do its best to make sure that all of it is taken into consideration as they move through each step of the process.

This webpage has been created to provide a central location for the committee to share resources, communications, and updates related to the committee's work. We invite you to bookmark this page for future reference.

Thanks again,

Heidi Backes (Chair, Faculty Senate)

Committee Charge: To examine elected chair models at comparable public institutions, including Missouri State's benchmark institutions, to better understand: (1) the specific duties of department chairs; (2) the compensation models for these roles; and (3) the election processes and terms of these positions, all as compared to the current AUL duties, compensation, and terms at MSU. As part of their deliberations, the committee will take into consideration the impact of an elected AUL model on the practice of shared governance across campus. The committee will write a report of their findings, with the goal of presenting this report to the Senate in the January session. If in the course of their work the committee determines that a switch from an appointed model to an elected model (or some variation thereof) is preferable, the committee will draft and present a Senate Action with the proposed model to the Senate at the January 2027 session for a vote in February.

As part of the work, the committee has been tasked with considering the following as they examine other models of leadership at our peer institutions and gather input from the campus community. (Note: this list was created in collaboration with input from the deans of each college; survey feedback will also be added to this list.)

1. Term specifications:

- Term length and limits: consider allowing more than one consecutive term; establishing a good rapport with donors and community members is an important part of the role of AUL, and allowing more than one term can help to foster those relationships
- Consider a policy for removal of a chair if their performance is unsatisfactory
- If an elected model is preferred, make sure the policy is an election for every new term and not a forced rotation among department faculty

2. Compensation:

- An equal stipend for all AULs across campus may not be entirely appropriate, since some units have many more faculty than others (and, thus, more administrative responsibilities for the AUL); perhaps consider a stipend partly based on size of the unit? Some units

have lower numbers of faculty but higher SCH; should this also factor into the stipend calculation?
- Consider current salary disparities between heads/directors and faculty within the same unit
- Consider course releases alongside stipends; department chairs are also typically still active teaching faculty (albeit with a significantly reduced teaching load)

3. Cost savings of a potential new model (and applications thereof):
- Consider the savings (if any) of a move to a new model as part of ongoing budget cuts and continued restructuring of colleges
- Depending on the amount saved, MSU could potentially use the residual savings for faculty professional development funding or even for ATB faculty raises

4. Other issues to consider:
- Make sure that the model gives the chair incentive/ability to handle personnel issues
- Think about onboarding/professional development for incoming AULs, whether in-house or external to MSU

5. If an entirely new model would be advisable, consider the transition process:
- Allow the current AULs to finish their contracted term (whatever amount of their 5-year contract remains)
- DCOA and MCHHS have a school structure that may necessitate a slightly different approach:
    - Are school directors different enough from department heads/chairs to warrant a different approach in these colleges? Should school directors only be hired via national searches, which would include a typical faculty-driven search committee with input from all faculty?