

The Faculty Advisory Committee

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From the early 1980's, until shortly before my retirement in 2013, when the administration in Adelphi restructured the European Division and eliminated the positions and the committee itself, I served as one of the representative on the Faculty Advisory Committee, for those teaching classes in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Here are some details:

Election/Meeting: Faculty travelled once a year (at university expense) to Heidelberg for an all-day meeting during which we elected our representatives. Faculty also discussed concerns with the representatives, with no administrators present. We then invited administrators in to talk about these issues with the full faculty. The meeting was often held on Memorial Day weekend, in conjunction with the European Division commencement, ensuring the greatest possible faculty and administration participation.

Representative duties: We met with the Director and the various Area Directors several times per year in Heidelberg to discuss issues of pay, benefits, course assignments, and academics. We also often worked to resolve issues of conflict between administrators and faculty. Some examples follow:

Pay and benefits: Over these decades, we worked to acquire faculty access to a European-based health insurance program, saw increased contributions to (and greater participation in) the Maryland state retirement program, and gained more reliable availability of paid sick leave. We also worked to streamline the system of faculty travel and expense vouchers to make it more transparent and make payments quicker.

Course assignments: Administrators came to accept the practice that courses mostly should be assigned by seniority and that exceptions should be justified. We had many lively discussions over these matters.

Academic issues: We often advocated for the scheduling of courses, which might not attract the highest enrollments but were an integral part of a collegiate curriculum: Anthropology, Art History, Music Appreciation, and Philosophy. We called them the "orphan disciplines" and urged that they not be neglected. (We were careful that a Representative never advocated for a course he or she taught.)

Issues of conflict could be trivial: Clerks at one Education Center told faculty that they would have to buy their own chalk and white board markers, that it was not European Division policy to provide them. When we told the Director about this at a

meeting, he made clear that no such policy existed, and the items were immediately resupplied.

Issues addressed could also be more serious: Tension (sometimes, just misunderstandings, disagreements or personality clashes) between faculty and Area Directors might result in course load and pay reductions for faculty or to non-renewal of a faculty contract. We were usually able to act to resolve these problems when faculty and administrators were brought together to discuss them or when they were brought to the attention of the Director.

Overall, our purpose was always to further the interests of the faculty of the European Division and maintain academic integrity. I never felt that our goals were different from that of the Division, whatever tensions might naturally appear among a group of academics with very different backgrounds, experience, and responsibilities. I always resisted the idea that the faculty worked for the administration. It seemed to me that we all worked together to advance the Division.

“Students first” is a popular slogan without any content unless the faculty who teach the students are first well represented. Students can’t be high in priority if faculty interests and concerns are disregarded or minimized. During my thirty-five years as faculty representative, we worked to make sure that that the latter principle was never forgotten.

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