

University Council Committee on Committees Report on the Functioning of Council Committees during Academic Year 2020-2021

Membership

Chair: William Braham

Staff: J. Patrick Walsh and Kathy Kruger

Members: Faculty: Cesar de la Fuente, Ezekiel Dixon-Román, S. Ryan Greysen, John Holmes, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Steven Kimbrough; PPSA: J. Patrick Walsh; WPPSA: Mariel Featherstone, Maureen Goldsmith; Graduate Student: Kelly Diaz; Undergraduate Student: Julia Davies

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the general functioning and procedures of University Council (UC) Committees during the 2020 – 2021 academic year. These committees are: Committee on Academic and Related Affairs (CARA), Committee on Campus and Community Life (CCL), Committee on Diversity and Equity (CDE), Committee on Facilities, and Committee on Personnel Benefits (CPB).

Suggestions for enhancing the functioning of these committees include:

(1) Designate a chair-elect to each committee who will eventually succeed the chair and provide continuity and institutional memory for the committee’s work; (2) in cases where specific committee charges address student-related matters, meetings should be schedule so as to maximize participation by student committee members; and (3) meeting minutes or recaps should be promptly distributed to all committee members to encourage feedback from those who were unable to participate during the appointed meeting hour.

Mechanism of Evaluation

Members of the Committee on Committees (UCCoC) collected information for this report. Information was collected via in-person, phone, and/or email interviews, using the list of questions below as a guide. UCCoC members interviewed committee members from their own constituency. For example, faculty members interviewed Committee Chairs, as well as faculty representatives as available; students sought to interview the corresponding student representatives; and staff members of the UCCoC interviewed their counterparts in the committees. This report provides an overview of the general findings from the data collected and comments on the functioning and procedures of each Committee. The UC Steering Committee is encouraged to refer to the individual committee reports for more information on the functioning of each committee.

Questions Posed to Each Committee Chair

1. What changes, if any, do you think need to be made in the committee's general charge? Do you feel the scope of the committee is appropriate?
2. What issues did the committee address this year? Will they be resolved by year’s end? Were the committee's specific charges for this year clear and appropriate?
3. What issues in the committee’s charges are unlikely to be addressed or resolved by the end of the academic year? What do you see as issues emerging for consideration next

- year?
4. How many times did the full committee meet? Were any subcommittees created? If so, how many were created, how often did they meet, what were their purposes, and did they achieve their goals?
 5. Is the membership of the committee well suited to the committee's charge in terms of relevant expertise, representation of interests, etc.? Does the chair demonstrate sufficient leadership; if not, then who on the committee does? Which members would you recommend to serve on the committee next year?
 6. What was the role of the administration's liaison in your committee? (The liaison is an administrative person who can provide relevant information for a committee charge or connect the committee with others on campus with relevant information.)
 7. Did someone from the administration provide explicit feedback on last year's recommendations? Was the feedback satisfactory? Were there any aspects that were not been resolved or for which a path to resolving them has not been developed?
 8. What problems did the committee encounter (e.g., limitations on access to necessary resources or information)?
 9. Was the committee effectively structured to accomplish its charges? Were there appropriate opportunities for the committee to provide advice, to work with its administrative liaison to resolve specific issues, and/or to generate grander recommendations?¹ Were constituents outside of the membership roster consulted in the committee's work?
 10. What recommendations about the committee's process and organization do you have? Is there any question that should have been asked about process that was not included?
 11. For Staff and Students: Do you feel that your voice was heard as part of the committee?
 12. For Students: Was there a primary and an alternate student representative on each committee?

General Comments across all Committees

Each UC committee has two major roles:

1. Performing a broad review in its areas of interest and monitoring the issues to determine whether there are any that require deeper exploration. While it is occasionally the case that no recommendations emerge from this process, the University is well served by having a representative body tracking important institutional and community matters on a continuing basis.
2. Performing an in-depth consideration of a small number (typically three to five) issues that arise from the previous year's agenda and its recommendations, or new information relating to the work of the previous year's committee. These issues are developed in

¹ Each committee has been charged to operate keeping the following process in mind: 1) To perform general advisory review of their area of concern; 2) To try to resolve specific issues that the committee wishes to address (or has been charged to address) by working through the administrative liaison; 3) In cases where the intra-committee level effort is not able to resolve issues, to generate recommendations to be addressed outside of the committee as formal proposals to be forwarded to the administration or for the University Council to consider.

consultation with Committee members from the previous year, Faculty Senate leadership, and University leadership. The examination of an issue charged to the committee may be undertaken by the committee as a whole, or by subcommittees, and will typically involve multiple meetings and conversations with people around the University engaged with the issue. While many issues can be resolved by working directly with administrators in the focus area to clarify issues and consider policy modifications, in the absence of a resolution of a given matter, the committee may request that Council Steering reexamine the issue. Committees and Council Steering should nevertheless bear in mind the importance of closure on matters addressed by the various committees.

While several factors can contribute to whether a committee functions effectively, there are a few governing principles which can help a UC committee function well: a clear explanation of the purpose of the committee by the chair; a careful delineation of the roles of the various members of the committee; the formation of appropriate subcommittees; scheduling meetings to fit the schedules of the members of the committee; and beginning meetings as soon as feasible in the fall semester to get an early start on the charges. Accordingly, as has been the practice in past years, the University Council Committee on Committees urges committee chairs to provide committee members with detailed orientation materials along with a thorough explanation of their roles and the committee's role in the University as a whole in order to facilitate substantive and efficient discussions on the committee's charges.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also created unique obstacles for committee productivity this year, including the need for meetings held exclusively in the virtual environment. While some feedback illustrated the extra flexibility provided by virtual meetings, many respondents lamented the limitations on collaboration and social exchange provided by traditional, in-person meetings.

Considering feedback received, UCCoC makes the following specific recommendations for consideration during the 2021 – 2022 academic year:

1. We encourage, whenever possible and in concert with the University Council bylaws, the designation of a chair-elect to each committee who will eventually succeed the chair and provide continuity and institutional memory for the committee's work.
2. In cases where specific committee charges address student-related matters, meetings should be schedule so as to maximize participation by student committee members.
3. Meeting minutes or recaps should be promptly distributed to all committee members to encourage feedback from those who were unable to participate during the appointed meeting hour. (For example, a repository on Penn Box accessible at all times by all committee members should be kept updated.)

University Council Committee on Academic and Related Affairs (CARA)

General comments

Several CARA members recognized the need to address accountability issues surrounding the Student Campus Compact, in addition to its stated charges.

UCCoC applauds the flexibility of CARA in navigating a mid-year committee leadership transition amidst the challenges of the pandemic. Noting the feedback received through the questionnaires, we recommend that subcommittee formation should be done both as a formal exercise to ensure clear delineation of responsibilities and during the second meeting of the academic year (or, at least, after the first meeting) to ensure that subcommittee work is best suited to the strengths of their respective members.

Membership

Co-Chairs: Julie Fairman and Krzysztof Laudanski

Liaison: Leo Charney

Staff: Jessie Burns

Members: Faculty: Montserrat Anguera, Nancy Hirschmann, Jessa Lingel, Janice Madden, Daniel Raff; PPSA: Lucia DiNapoli, Rashmi Kumar; WPPSA: Elisabeth Colella, Donna Crawley; GAPSA: Pascal Rathle, Christian Tabedski; UA: Deborah Olatunji, Kevin Zhao

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Academic and Related Affairs (CARA):

- (i) shall have cognizance over matters of recruitment, admissions, and financial aid that concern the University as a whole and that are not the specific responsibility of individual faculties, including the authority to carry out studies on existing recruitment and admissions procedures and their relationships with existing policies on admissions and financial aid and to recommend changes in policy to the Council;
- (ii) shall consider the purposes of a University bookstore and advise the Council and the management of the University bookstore on policies, development, and operations;
- (iii) shall review and monitor issues related to the international programs and other international activities of the University, including advice and policy recommendations in such areas as services for international students and scholars, foreign fellowships and studies abroad, faculty, staff and student exchange programs, and cooperative undertakings with foreign universities;
- (iv) shall advise the vice provost and director of libraries on the policies, development, and operation of the University libraries;
- (v) shall have cognizance over recreation and intramural and intercollegiate athletics and their integration with the educational program of the University, including the planning and provision of adequate facilities for various sports and recreational activities; and
- (vi) shall have cognizance of all matters of policy relating to research and the general environment for research at the University, including the assignment and distribution of indirect costs and the assignment of those research funds distributed by the University, and shall advise the Administration on those proposals for sponsored research referred to it because of potential conflict with University policy.

2020-21 Specific Charges

1. Review and comment on current issues pertaining to Title IX.
2. Assess the University's need-blind admissions policy as well as its other initiatives for first-generation, low-income (FGLI) and middle to lower-middle income students, including the financial impact of the second-year housing and potential meal plan requirements, the ongoing progress of Penn First Plus programs, and the needs of specific populations, such as STEM and international students.

The University Council Committee on Campus and Community Life (CCL)

General Comments

CCL members recognized the need to develop a working definition of the term “community” for the purposes of its work. Given the nature of its work in engaging with the surrounding community, regular participation by a representative from the Division of Public Safety was also encouraged.

UCCoC endorses both above-stated recommendations and recommends that the University Council, through its appropriate mechanisms, consider amending CCL's general charge and or membership structure to address them.

Membership

Chair: Sara Jacoby

Liaison: Tamara King, Tony Sorrentino

Staff: Emily Hobbs

Members: Faculty: Francesca Rusello Ammon, Sigal Barsade, Delphine Dahan, Nancy Hodgson, David Hoffman; PPSA: Traci Chupik, Laurie Hall; WPPSA: Mariel Featherstone, Laura Naden; GAPSA: Aalok Thakkar; UA: Deborah Olatunji, Simran Rajpal

General Committee Charge

(i) shall have cognizance over the University's communications and public relations activities in their various formats and media including electronic, audio (the telephone system), video and printed copy, and it shall monitor the University's internal communications, the operations of the University Communications Office, communications to alumni, and the interpretation of the University to its many constituencies;

(ii) shall advise the Council on the relationship of the University to the surrounding community and the relevant University policies, work to ensure that the University develops and maintains a constructive relationship with the community, and monitor pending real estate activities of concern to the community;

(iii) shall have cognizance of the conditions and rules of undergraduate and graduate student life on campus, including 1) gathering and analyzing information concerning student life and student affairs and making recommendations to the Council; and 2) responding as appropriate to requests from and reporting information and recommendations concerning student life and student affairs to the vice provost for university life and other appropriate administrative officers; and

(iv) shall advise the president, the director of public safety, and the administrators or directors of specific buildings, offices, or projects on all matters concerning safety and security in the conduct of their operations, including consideration and assessment of means to improve safety and security on the campus.

2020-21 Specific Charges

1. Review and comment on Penn’s approach to providing social services including those now delivered through the Division of Public Safety, specifically as they relate to matters including but not limited to drug abuse, homelessness, and mental health
2. Review and comment on West Philadelphia map aggregating and integrating data on residency by Penn affiliates, Penn real estate development, and crime statistics.

The University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity (CDE)

General Comments

Some CDE members encouraged greater committee participation by sexual and religious minorities.

UCCoC endorses the above recommendation and encourages the relevant nominating bodies to consider this guidance when making appointments to this committee in future years.

Membership

Chair: Ben Garcia

Liaison: Sam Starks

Staff: Kuan Evans

Members: Faculty: DaCarla Albright, Kathleen Hall, Sarah J. Jackson, Jennifer Punt, Eric Schelter, Flavia Vitale; PPSA: Rebecca Stuhr; WPPSA: Dana Allison, Tiffany Perkins; GAPSA: Jason Andrehak, Catherine Zhang; UA: Lily Coady, Alexander Eapen

General Committee Charge:

The Committee on Diversity and Equity aids Penn in fostering and taking full advantage of its diversity as well as in strengthening ties across all boundaries to enrich and enliven the campus community. The Committee shall advise the offices of the president, provost, and the executive vice presidents on ways to develop and maintain a supportive atmosphere on campus for the inclusion and appreciation of diversity among all members of the University community. The Committee will review and provide advice regarding the University’s equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and policies. The areas in which the Committee shall report to the Council include diversity within the educational and work settings, integration of staff and faculty into the larger campus community, and ways to foster a campus environment that is inclusive and supportive of difference. The Committee also will advise the Administration on specific diversity issues that may arise on campus.

2020-21 Specific Charges

1. Identify where structures and practices (at the University, school, departmental, and individual levels) perpetuate biases and systemic racism as they apply to the remit of the University Council.
2. Identify and recommend ways to overcome barriers to inclusion and diversity within and across faculty, staff, administration, and the student body.
3. Review and recommend ways to improve centralized delivery of diversity and equity resources.

The University Council Committee on Facilities

General Comments

Committee members noted that its charges necessarily evolved throughout the year as a result of the pandemic and are likely to evolve again as people return more regularly to campus.

UCCoC encourages its collaboration with Penn Sustainability and the Environmental Innovations Initiative since the gradual repopulation of campus will provide unique opportunities for behavioral changes to this end.

Membership

Chair: Michael McGarvey

Liaison: Mark Kocent

Staff: Taylor Berkowitz

Members: Faculty: Paulo Arratia, Cary Coglianese, Erick Guerra, Michael May, Claire Mitchell; PPSA: Katherine Primus, Natalie Walker; WPPSA: Cynthia DiLoretto, Jennifer Vatz; GAPSA: Alex Chen; UA: Nicholas Pawalowski, Matt Weltman

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Facilities shall be responsible for keeping under review the planning and operation by the University of its physical plant and all services associated therewith, including transportation and parking.

2020-21 Specific Charges

1. Review the status of campus restrooms to ensure that all means of COVID-19 transmission are minimized.
2. Review the feasibility of sewage monitoring for viruses and infectious diseases.
3. Review and comment on issues related to campus planning for the establishment of all-gender restrooms.

The University Council Committee on Personnel Benefits

General comments

In addition to its stated charges, the Committee on Personnel Benefits spent time reviewing changes to Penn's Retirement Savings Plans, which were effective during April 2021.

In concert with feedback received via the questionnaires, UCCoC encourages the relevant nominating bodies to seek representation from as many schools and centers as possible when making appointments to this committee in future years.

Membership

Chair: Tanja Kral

Liaisons: Jack Heuer, Susan Sproat

Staff: Melissa Brown

Members: Faculty: Janice Bellace, Markus Blatz, Paula Henthorn, Julia Lynch, Olivia Mitchell, Laura Perna (ex-officio); PPSA: Valerie Morgan, Bryan Wilkinson, Miriam Wright; WPPSA: Darlene Jackson, Rhonda Kirlaw, Rosa Vargas

General Committee Charge

The Committee on Personnel Benefits shall have cognizance over the benefits programs for all University personnel. The Committee shall consist of eight faculty members (of whom one shall be a member of the Senate Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty (SCESF)), three representatives of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly, and three representatives of the Weekly-Paid Professional Staff Assembly. The Vice President for Human Resources, Associate Provost, and Director of Benefits shall serve as non-voting *ex officio* members.

2020-21 Specific Charges

1. Review and comment on the University's health benefits and insurance, specifically for additional risks borne by persons required to work on-campus during the coronavirus pandemic.
2. Review and comment on trade-offs of continuing to provide retirement account contributions for employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Read, review, and comment on issues related to financial education resources available to faculty and staff.