



COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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April 2, 2010

Janet Staiger  
Chair of Faculty Council  
The University of Texas at Austin

Dear Janet,

I am not quite sure of the format you are looking for in response to the questions outlined in your November 3, 2009 letter to Dean Douglas Dempster concerning college governance. In the paragraphs below I have attempted to provide a general overview of the governance structure of the College of Fine Arts. Please keep in mind that each academic unit in the college has established practices that may vary slightly from the statements I have made. In addition, the governance processes and procedures in each of the academic units meet the requirements of their respective national accreditation organizations.

The College of Fine Arts is comprised of three academic units as well as the Texas Performing Arts that also serves as an integral part of the academic mission, although without a faculty. Each of the academic units operates under the governing structure of an Executive Committee. The elected members of the executive committee represent the various ranks of the tenured and tenure-track faculty and the major discipline areas of the unit. Each unit adheres to the policies and procedures outlined in the Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Within each academic unit there is a chair or director and numerous area or division heads. These are all faculty administrators who, in most cases, are elected by the faculty and appointed by the chair or director. These faculty administrators serve a vital role in the dissemination of policy and procedures. Through area or division meetings, the faculty is informed of departmental or school policies, college policies and university policies.

There are numerous standing committees within each of the academic units that oversee a wide range of service areas and are in most cases appointed by the Chair or Director with input from faculty administrators that are also appointed by the Chair/Director.

In addition to the academic unit standing committees, there are committees appointed by the Dean that serve the process of promotion and tenure, third-year reviews, post-tenure review, curriculum development, research awards, and distinguished teaching awards to name a few. In addition, there are ad hoc committees appointed by the Dean as needed. Examples are the Task Force on Undergraduate Education and the Task Force on Gender Equity.

Faculty appointments to committees are made in one of several ways. For example within the departments or school the Chair/Director makes most committee assignments with the exception of those that are elected (such as the Executive Committee). Chairs and Directors try to involve a diverse group of the faculty by rank and area in the service demands of the unit. They try to protect junior faculty from being overburdened by service responsibilities to allow them time for teaching and research as they matriculate towards tenure.

Some college-wide committees are formulated by elections. An example is the Undergraduate Policy and Curriculum Committee. Each academic unit elects one faculty member to serve a two-year term. The chair of each unit's undergraduate curriculum committee, or his/her designee, also serves on the committee. Terms are staggered to allow for continuity from year to year. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs serves as the committee chair and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs serves as an ex-officio member.

Within the College of Fine Arts it is fair to say that all curriculum development originates with the faculty, the only exception being curriculum revisions that are mandated from the top down (including State mandates for our Education and Certification areas). Curriculum proposals in each academic unit begin with the faculty and must be approved at the departmental or school level before being considered at the college level. Proposals presented to the college by the academic units are reviewed and voted on by the COFA Undergraduate Policy and Curriculum Committee. They are either returned to the academic unit for clarification or revision, or forwarded, with approval of the dean, to the Faculty Council for university approval or rejection.

The college has a minimum of one college-wide meeting each year. Historically, there has never been a quorum of the faculty (over 50%) present and therefore the meetings generally take the form of the dean presenting a state-of-the college message followed by questions and answers from the faculty. The dean also makes presentations at the annual departmental or school meetings at the beginning of each academic year.

Each academic unit has written policy and procedural guidelines for its departmental governance that is accessible to all faculty. Each of the academic units has departmental or school-wide meetings called by the Chair or Director. Agenda items for the meeting are solicited from the faculty and an agenda is distributed prior to the meeting. Voting privileges are similar to those observed by the Faculty Council. Policies and procedures are posted on the College of Fine Arts web site.

Finally, each academic unit votes at the mandated time on whether or not to continue with the Executive Committee structure or revert to a Budget Council structure.

I hope that I have covered the general intent of the questions in the November letter to the dean. Please let me know if there are any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth J. Hale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kenneth J. Hale, Marguerite Fairchild Professor in Art  
Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
College of Fine Arts

Cc: Dempster  
Shockley