

A Report On Student Membership

On

Academic Committees

by

The Faculty Senate

Committee On Committees

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

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Student membership on academic committees is an issue that is currently being considered by many universities across the nation. The Committee on Committees of the Faculty Senate, in its continuing program of the analysis and development of the academic committee structure of the Senate, proposed to consider the matter of student membership on Academic Committees of the East Carolina University Faculty Senate. Is it possible that the participation of students in this phase of academic governance could make education more relevant for the individual student and enhance the overall educational programs of the University?

To gain information on which to base decisions in this matter, the Committee on Committees utilized a two-fold approach:

1. To sample the national scene, a questionnaire was sent to a group of universities and colleges within the United States, requesting information on practices related to student membership on academic committees. A summary of the results of the questionnaire follows.
2. To sample the local feeling, an open hearing was conducted at East Carolina University to consider the written and verbal comments of the members of the University community, both faculty and students. Summaries of the written statements, and of the hearing follow (on page 3).

Summary of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire was forwarded to 85 institutions of higher education within the United States in an effort to determine prevalent practices concerned with student membership on academic committees, and on certain other

university governing bodies. Fifty-nine of these instruments were returned, and analyzed in terms of certain concepts that were relevant to student participation in academic governance.

More than three-fourths of the institutions that replied to the questionnaire had a policy that provided for student membership on some academic committee, and almost half of the schools indicated that students also serve on other university bodies.

Qualifications for students to serve on academic committees varied, but the trend was toward the requirements that a student be a full-time undergraduate, and an upperclassman. At most of the institutions, students were selected for service on academic committees through the independent action of the students, but about one school in five indicated that the selection would be subject to the approval of the administration.

Student membership on academic committees is generally a recent development, but the policy was in effect at several schools prior to 1960. Initiation of student-participation policies most often involved the administration, acting independently at about one-third of the schools, and in combination with students and/or faculty at about one-half of the institutions. Student contribution as members of academic committees was judged as significant (moderate or substantial) by 43 of the 52 institutions that reported some student participation.

The trend in student membership on various academic committees seems to be toward more student involvement on those committees that are associated with activities which are primarily student-oriented, and less involvement on those committees closely related to matters that are primarily faculty-oriented.

A separate analysis of the questionnaires that were returned by the public institutions in the South did not produce any trends that were

significantly different from those detected in the national pattern.

Summary of the Written Statements

A total of 11 written statements were received, 10 from faculty members and one from the Student Government Association (SGA). The SGA statement was favorable toward student membership on academic committees. None of the statements from faculty members expressed opposition to student membership. Some reservations were noted by the faculty statements, including the wisdom of students serving on the Faculty Welfare Committee, the issue of voting or non-voting status for student members, and the feasibility of considering student participation committee by committee, rather than as a "blanket" policy.

Excerpts from the statements included the following:

"I believe that such a policy (student membership on academic committees) would promote the students to a position they deserve in the University community, enhance the relevance of the University's academic program, and enlarge the channels by which student opinion may be heard." "...academic planning should take full advantage of our student body as a resource of information concerning effectiveness." "...as (our committee) is, we could easily overlook things of special interest to the students." "...I have had the opportunity to work with students on some non-academic committees, (where they) have made valuable contributions..." "It is my opinion that the academic climate can be improved by interchange of ideas between faculty and students which will result from students being added to most of our Faculty Senate committees." The writer of the SGA statement thought that ... (the addition of students on academic committees would be) "another step toward progress on behalf of the Faculty Senate."

Summary of the Open Hearing

An open hearing was held on February 20, 1969, at 4:00 p.m., in NA 132, for the purpose of "receiving statements relative to the inclusion of student members on academic committees at East Carolina University."

(Official Announcement #20)

The hearing was attended by approximately 50 people, of which about one-fourth were faculty members, and the balance were students. Dr. John B. Davis, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Committees, presided. As indicated above, the hearing was scheduled to receive statements. However, after the statements had been received, the program was opened for questions and discussion.

After presentations were called for, several faculty members spoke, including the President of the ECU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). He referred to two publications of the AAUP, and indicated that both of the papers "support the position that the students should be free to express their views on institutional policy."

A representative of the SGA indicated that, while student apathy is a problem at ECU, students would like to have a "say-so" in the decisions that affect their daily life; so the SGA would favor student membership on academic committees.

On the matter of the selection of student members of the academic committees, the SGA spokesman thought that selection by the SGA Executive Council would "work well". Other selection methods mentioned included election by the student body, and self-nomination by interested students, with subsequent selection by the SGA or other governing body.

The SGA representative indicated that students should have voting rights on the committee. The feasibility of "active" versus "consulting" student membership was mentioned from the floor. The consensus was that a 2.0 (out of a 4.0) grade point average would be a reasonable requirement for student membership on academic committees, but that exceptions could be made if the student was well qualified. The sentiment of the group at the hearing seemed to be negative toward freshman student membership on the committees. The SGA spokesman felt that students were prepared to

accept the responsibility associated with committee membership.

The question arose as to whether the SGA was representative of the non-SGA student. Comment from the floor indicated that information about the University governing processes may be insufficient. The SGA spokesman indicated that students were becoming more aware of University governance, and that student participation on academic committees would foster this awareness by providing a "feedback" function to the general student body.

The question arose as to how many student members should be on each committee, and the SGA spokesman suggested one student member per committee.

Availability of the Complete Report

The complete report on the issue of student membership on academic committees, including the information on which the Summaries are based, is available in the Office of Institutional Research, and may be examined there by interested persons.

Recommendations of the Committee on Committees

On the basis of the findings which have been summarized above (the questionnaire, the written statements, and the open hearing), the Committee on Committees recommends as follows:

1. That the composition of the Academic Committees of the Faculty Senate be changed as follows:

<u>Name of Committee</u>	<u>Present Size</u>		<u>Proposed Size</u>	
	<u>Faculty</u>		<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Students</u>
Admissions	7		7	1
Calendar	6		6	1
Credits	6		6	1

<u>Name of Committee</u>	<u>Present Size</u>	<u>Proposed Size</u>	
	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Students</u>
University Curriculum	12	12	2
Continuing Education	6	6	1
Library	10	10	2
Student Guidance	7	7	1
Teacher Education and Career	8	8	2
Vocational Education	6	6	1
Student Recruitment	6	6	1
Student Scholarship, Fellowship, and Financial Aid	8	8	1

2. That the students have full voting rights on the committees;
3. That there be one student alternate member for each committee;
4. That the student on the Student Scholarship, Fellowship, and Financial Aid Committee be a holder of an East Carolina University Academic Scholarship;
5. That the Student Government Association have the authority for establishing the procedures for selecting the student members of the committee;
6. That these recommendations be implemented during Fall Quarter, 1969.