

Regulation on Establishing Consultative Bodies Representing Staff Employees and Improving SPA Grievance Systems

As agreed at the Administrative Council meeting of May 26, 1998, each campus will have in operation by the end of the fall 1998 academic term a consultative body representing staff employees with which the chancellor or his or her designee will meet on a regular basis. A system-wide staff assembly comparable to the Faculty Assembly will not be established.

In creating a campus body of this type, or evaluating such a body that may already be functioning, the importance of tailoring it to the needs and preferences the chancellor and the affected employees may consider relevant is acknowledged, and it is appreciated that those considerations may vary from campus to campus. A number of questions usefully could receive attention in attempting to insure that such bodies are fully effective instrumentalities for identifying and resolving employment problems.

First, careful thought must be given to how best to define "staff employment" for this purpose. Clearly this organization is to reflect interests of employees other than faculty members and senior administrative officials. However, in view of the broadened definitions of University employment exempt from the State Personnel Act, the question is whether the staff body should be limited in its focus to SPA employment, so as to help insure a beneficial commonality of interests. In a similar vein, questions about whether supervisory employees, as distinguished from supervised employees, should be included, as that distinction may impact questions about candid and effective exchanges of information and opinion, may want to be explored.

Second, unlike the faculty, which has a degree of homogeneity and commonality of basic interests, the staff complement, however defined, consists of a very broad and diverse array of job categories; different groups of staff employees are likely to have significantly different interests and concerns. Thus, it would seem desirable and appropriate to insure that those different categories (e.g., service employees, clerical employees, technical employees, etc.) are represented in the body on some ratably apportioned basis. It also may be helpful to institute a committee structure within such bodies to reflect the different interests of different employee groups.

These are merely suggestions, rather than prescriptions, that speak to choices a campus can make in attempting to insure that the organizations are effective additions to campus decision-making processes.

In addition to providing meaningful opportunities for communicating about employment concerns, we must insure that State-mandated and campus-administered grievance systems are working well. To that end, each campus should provide in its regulations that aggrieved employees who wish to use institutional grievance procedures may consult with a fellow employee of their choice in bringing and prosecuting such a complaint, including the right of the grievant to have that employee-assistant accompany them during any hearings that may be held as a part of the grievance process; such assistants would serve as advisors, not as advocates or spokespersons. A collegial assistance program would achieve best results, ultimately beneficial to both grievant and the institution, if employees interested in equipping themselves to serve as such assistants had access to some effective advance training. Periodically announced orientation programs should offer an overview of the grievance system, so that persons so trained could help guide their fellow employees through the sometimes complex processes entailed in pursuing a grievance.

[This is a rewrite of Administrative Memorandum #383.]