



June 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

COVID 19-related curricular and teaching decisions are currently being made -- or have already been made -- that will have dramatic consequences for all instructional faculty, and the university, in the short and long run. Hence, the voice of the non-administrative instructional faculty in college governance is especially important now and we are asking you to take a moment to think about how your views are being represented and communicated in the midst of these important decisions.

As you may know, we sent letters¹ on April 22nd and April 30th to the Board of Visitors, the President, the Provost, and the Faculty Senate expressing our concerns regarding the absence of a faculty voice and transparency in the decision-making process.

Their response confirmed our fears that faculty (both full-time and part-time) representation on the COVID 19 task forces and committees is minimal; that all such faculty on those committees were appointed rather than elected; and that those bodies' deliberations have been confidential, and not transparent.

It has come to our attention that faculty are not involved, as the Faculty Handbook requires that they be, in the exercise of their shared governance rights over JMU task forces and committees, in violation of the Faculty Handbook: **“The Senate shall elect or nominate individuals to represent the interests of the entire instructional faculty to University committees or other such bodies as shall require representation.”** (VI. Constitution of the Faculty Senate, Article I: Purpose and Functions. Section 2) <https://www.jmu.edu/facultyhandbook/vi-constitution/article1.shtml>.

Our JMU Faculty Handbook is very clear about the faculty role in college governance: IV. Faculty Role in Governance, IV.A. College Governance): (emphasis added) <https://www.jmu.edu/facultyhandbook/iv-role/a-college.shtml>

Each college of the university shall determine the specific structure and membership of its governance bodies. The college faculty, college dean and the provost must approve this structure. The governance structure shall include **elected faculty representatives** from each academic unit of the college. The governance bodies will have the function of advising the dean and making

¹ Available for viewing on the Faculty Senate faculty Discussion Board on Canvas: https://canvas.jmu.edu/courses/1589359/discussion_topics/7472982

recommendations to the dean and other appropriate bodies on matters of **curriculum, budget and planning, and personnel**.

Furthermore, our Faculty Handbook states (quoting IV.A.1. **Curriculum**) that:

“The responsibilities of college governance bodies in the area of curriculum include:

- Overseeing curricular matters including the approval/deletion/revision of programs and courses within the college; and
- Communicating information, recommendations and decisions to the faculty of the college.”

Moreover, the Faculty Handbook says (quoting IV.A.2. **Budget and Planning**) that:

“In the areas of budget and planning, the responsibilities of college governance bodies include:

- **Advising the dean on matters relating to college organization, budget, facilities and planning;**
- **Reviewing enrollment trends and budget allocations; advising the dean on the general oversight, direction and priorities of the college;**
- Offering recommendations affecting the university beyond the college level;
- Passing any recommendations on to the appropriate university or Faculty Senate committee; and
- Communicating information, recommendations and decisions to the faculty of the college.”

If any college does not have such a functional governance body, it **violates the Faculty Handbook**; deprives faculty of an important means by which to advise deans on “matters relating to college organization, budget, facilities, and planning;” deprives deans of the much needed benefits of such advice and oversight; and, in sum, contributes to a dysfunctional system of shared governance. Genuine faculty governance requires that we all ask ourselves the following questions:

Does my college have such a functioning committee -- one that “advises the dean on matters relating to college organization, budget, facilities, and planning”? Does my department have an **elected** faculty representative serving on it? Does that position **rotate every three years**, as our faculty handbook requires? Does my elected faculty representative **share with my department the reports** of the work accomplished by this governance body?

In conclusion, it is vital, *now more than ever*, that these college governing bodies function as the *JMU Handbook clearly requires*. If these bodies are not functioning, the faculty is not exercising its appropriate role in shared academic governance. Please verify that your college or department is following this Faculty Handbook policy. As always, feel free to contact your local chapter and representative at aaup.jmu@gmail.com

Sincerely, on behalf of AAUP-JMU chapter members,

Doe Polanz, President

Thomas Adajian, Vice-President

CC: Heather Coltman, Provost

Val Larsen, Faculty Senate speaker