UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE CHARTER

Background and Process
December 5, 2014

The University Faculty Council (UFC) was formed in 1984 as a successor to the Faculty Advisory Panel with a charge to “provide information and advice to the President and the Provost regarding faculty interests and concerns as they bear upon the life and operation of the institution.” The UFC’s birth represented a significant recognition of the principle of shared governance at the University of Richmond by providing the faculty with an institutionalized method of communication with senior administrators.

In April 2013, some members of the UFC brought forward a proposal to examine faculty governance at the University of Richmond. The UFC agreed to the proposal and voted to form a Subcommittee on Faculty Governance “to examine current governing structures and, if the subcommittee deems it necessary, to recommend the consideration of possible changes.”

In August 2013, the UFC designated seven faculty members to serve on the Subcommittee on Faculty Governance. The Subcommittee included representation from each of the five schools: three members from the School of Arts & Sciences and one each from the Robins School of Business, the School of Law, the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, and the School of Professional and Continuing Studies.

Despite the historical importance of the UFC, the Subcommittee determined that the faculty at the University of Richmond could deliberate and express its wishes more effectively with a new representative body. After examining the UFC charge, the university committee structure, and models for faculty representation and shared governance at other colleges and universities, members of the Subcommittee concluded that the UFC has become an insufficient vehicle for developing partnerships and enacting shared governance across the institution. Shared governance requires forums in which the interests and priorities of the community as a whole can be discussed and aligned, so that all feel vested in the future of the institution. During the fall of 2013, the Subcommittee drafted a proposal for a University Faculty Senate, a representative body organized to better accomplish these ends.

The Subcommittee on Faculty Governance began its work with a review of governance procedures at a number of other institutions. It focused on schools with robust faculty governance structures in a variety of sizes and constitutions (public/private, R1/liberal arts). This review of peer and aspirant institutions revealed that most ambitious and nationally recognized colleges and universities utilize some type of representative body for shared governance, most often a faculty senate.

The Subcommittee also considered the recommendations for effective shared governance provided by The Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, which was jointly developed and formally endorsed by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) in 1966. This document and AAUP guidelines have provided the skeletal structures for much of the proposal.

In December 2013, the Subcommittee presented a draft proposal for a University Faculty Senate to the UFC. The UFC voted that the Subcommittee should share the proposal with the university community and initiate a conversation about how best to discharge the faculty’s role in shared governance. The Subcommittee then prepared a plan for soliciting feedback on the proposal from the university faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees. In January 2014, it met with the university president, the university provost, and the secretary to the Board of Trustees to discuss the proposal.

In February and March 2014, the Subcommittee continued to clarify ways in which the Senate might participate in university governance by hosting a series of meetings with faculty, both at the school level and at the university level, as well as with university vice presidents and school deans. The Subcommittee brought a revised proposal to the University Faculty Meeting on March 20 for discussion. Over the summer of 2014, the Subcommittee continued to revise the proposal based on feedback from the university community, including the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees.

On September 8, 2014, the Subcommittee presented a revised proposal to the university faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees. The Subcommittee then hosted a series of public forums to gather feedback and answer questions from the university faculty. It also solicited formal suggestions for revision from the faculty. On October 26, the Subcommittee sent the university faculty a report summarizing and commenting upon the suggestions for revision it received. The UFC hosted a public forum on November 3 to discuss the suggestions.

On November 10, the University Faculty Council voted to send the proposed Senate Charter and the implementation plan to the full faculty for consideration.

On November 17, a confidential electronic ballot was issued to every faculty member eligible to vote. Voting closed at midnight on November 21. The faculty voted to adopt the proposed University Faculty Senate Charter.

The Board of Trustees considered and approved the University Faculty Senate Charter on December 5, 2014.