Strengthening the Quality of Dialogue between the Board and Faculty and Student Representatives

Background on role of Faculty and Student Representatives
The Board of Trustees adopted a policy in 1971 to provide for faculty and student representation to the Board. The policy has been revised several times and currently states:

Section 205 Faculty and Student Representation to Board

Effective: 11/18/71
Last Revised: 7/10/06; 1/11/10; 7/15/13
Responsible Office: Clerk of the Board

Policy Statement:

The Trustees endorse the concept of faculty and student access to the University System decision-making process to provide advice and opinions on matters of common interest, and to enhance communication and sense of community within the University of Maine System.

To create the environment for interaction among and between faculty and student representatives, the Trustees and System administration, the Trustees will provide opportunities for participation in the meetings of the committees of the Board.

One faculty member, one undergraduate student from each of the seven universities, one graduate student from the University of Southern Maine, and one graduate student from the University of Maine will be appointed by the Board as non-voting representatives to the Board of Trustees and invited to participate as non-voting members on the Academic & Student Affairs Committee and Finance/Facilities & Technology Committee.

The faculty and student governing bodies at each university are charged to develop procedures through the institution’s formal committee selection processes for the election of one member each as representatives to the Board of Trustees. Normally, the representative is expected to complete a two year term; therefore, it is an expectation that the minimum term of service by both faculty and student representatives to the Board be two years. The nominations will be forwarded through the Presidents to the Chancellor for submission to the Board for Trustee approval.
The Board has also established administrative procedures related to the role of Faculty and Student Representatives. The Administrative Guidelines (attached) address issues such as appointment, attendance, reimbursement of expenses, and access to the Board agenda.

In recent years the Faculty and Student Representatives have had a regular time on the agenda at each Board meeting to meet with the full Board. They also participate in assigned committee meetings whether those meetings occur at a full Board meeting or off-cycle. In addition at each Board meeting there has been a time for the Faculty and Student Representatives to meet as groups by themselves. The meeting time with the full Board has been used largely at the discretion of each representative group for them to provide information to the Board, request information or discuss an item of interest or concern.

The Board would like to deepen and strengthen the quality of discussion with the Faculty and Student Representatives. To that end, Chair Collins has asked that meetings of the Faculty and Student Representatives occur primarily in the Academic and Student Affairs committee with topics funneling up to the full Board as appropriate.

At the February 27 meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, Committee Chair Johnson would like to have a discussion of committee members and the Faculty and Student Representatives about how to move forward to achieve the goal of a deeper and stronger dialogue.

Goals for Stronger Dialogue

Subject to the discussion on February 27, the following draft goals are suggested:

1. Engage in dialogue about important issues in higher education, especially related to the future and challenges of the University of Maine System;
2. Engage the Faculty and Student Representatives in discussions of topics about which the Representatives have special knowledge and about which the Board will be making decisions, e.g. matters relating to decisions the Board’s Goals and Actions;
3. Build stronger relationships between the members of the Board and members of the representative groups;
4. Provide a forum for two-way information sharing and exchange of views with sufficient preparation to enable fuller, richer participation;
5. As applicable to the topic being discussed, and working through the faculty and student representatives, engage additional faculty and students in the dialog. For example, pertinent to a specific topic, invite those with special knowledge or focus in a discipline or program area, access issue, or delivery model. In addition, Faculty and Student Representatives might be asked to take soundings of faculty and student opinion on important topics to inform Board decision making and to serve as a liaison back to faculty and students.
Ideas for Achieving Goals

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee is looking to the Faculty and Student Representatives for ideas about how to achieve these goals. One idea put forth for consideration follows:

Schedule a major portion of some meetings of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee to be devoted to discussion with the Faculty and Student Representatives. This might be twice per year for faculty oriented issues and twice per year for student oriented issues with an hour devoted to the discussion. Some topics might be jointly led by Faculty and Student Representatives. The Faculty and Student Representatives would be involved in selecting the topics and would then be responsible for shaping and leading the discussion, with support as needed from Vice Chancellor Susan Hunter, Chief Student Affairs Officer Rosa Redonnett or Board Clerk Tracy Bigney. The group would be charged with developing an agenda item summary, identifying background information and resources such as brief readings or data, and formulating discussion questions. Following each discussion the Committee and the representatives group would determine appropriate follow up, which could be further information development, addressing the topic at a full Board meeting, or other appropriate action.

Examples of issues for these major discussions might include:

- How is the work of faculty changing in response to technology and demographics? What are the implications of these changes for faculty careers and employment? Is being a faculty member a totally different career than it was twenty years ago? If so, how?
- How can UMS best provide access and meet the needs of students who have some college and are seeking degree completion while working and raising families? How are the pedagogical and program needs of these students different?
- What do students want and expect in the delivery of higher education in light of changes in technology and their needs as citizens and employees?
- How can UMS improve the quality of academic programs and provide greater programmatic access to students through inter-campus collaboration?
- What is the impact of the financial structural gap on students and faculty? How can the structural gap be reduced?

In addition to these major discussion opportunities, the Faculty and Student Representatives could request the inclusion of a specific item on the committee agenda at any meeting for a brief discussion or update. These items might be one way of identifying topics for future major discussions or might deal with more routine or ad hoc issues.

Connecting to the Board of Trustees

In strengthening the dialogue at the level of the Academic and Student Affairs committee, we do not want to lose the connection of the Faculty and Student Representatives to the full Board. Possible ways to continue this connection include:
1. In their reports at each Board meeting the Chair of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and the Vice chancellor for Academic Affairs will include information about the work of the committee with the Faculty and Student Representatives.

2. Following each major discussion topic the Committee members and the Faculty or Student Representatives will decide whether the information needs to funnel up to the full Board and how to accomplish that.

3. At one meeting per year (perhaps the end of the academic year), there would be a standing agenda item for an annual report from the Faculty and Student Representatives.

4. At any Board meeting the Faculty or Student Representatives could submit an information report to be included in the Board agenda book and disseminated to all Trustees and Presidents.
Administrative Guidelines for Faculty and Student Representatives

1. Appointment to Committees

Faculty and student representatives are responsible for submitting nominations to the Chancellor for appointment to standing committees by October 1 of each academic year.

Faculty and student representatives will be appointed, as appropriate, by the Chair of the Board to Trustee ad hoc Committees.

2. Attendance at Committee Meetings

Faculty and student representatives are encouraged to attend all meetings of their committees and will be notified of the time and place of the meetings by the Clerk of the Board.

Faculty and student representatives will meet as a group at a scheduled time, with a formal agenda, in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Board meetings.

Committee meetings, except for discussion of issues which are covered by law, are open to the public.

3. Attendance at Board of Trustees Meetings

Faculty and student representatives are encouraged to attend all public meetings of the Board of Trustees. Participation in Board meetings is limited to Board members and the Chancellor. Other persons, including faculty and student representatives, are occasionally invited by the Trustees or the Chancellor to make comments pertinent to the subject under discussion. Faculty and student representatives are urged to make their input within the committees to the end that committee recommendations are properly reflective of their viewpoints.

Executive sessions of the Board of Trustees and its Committees are not open to faculty and student representatives.

4. Reimbursement for Travel Expenses

Faculty and student representatives are entitled to reimbursement for reasonable travel expenses incurred in fulfilling their obligations as a representative. Travel vouchers and information on travel arrangements and policies may be obtained from the Clerk of the Board. All travel vouchers are to be submitted to the Clerk of the Board.

5. Procedures for Access to the Board Agenda
In order to provide increased opportunities for more effective linkages between student and faculty thinking and Board action, the Chancellor will schedule periodic meetings with the representatives for discussion of mutual issues and concerns.

All formal recommendations regarding campus-level affairs made to the Board of Trustees must be through the Campus President to the Chancellor, and through the Chancellor to the Board of Trustees. Recommendations either system-wide in nature or affecting more than one campus must be made through the Chancellor for Board consideration.

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