Participation in Shared Governance: Ours to Lose

By Julia Eisenstein, MFA President and Laurie Britt-Smith, MFA Vice President

Faculty participation in shared governance is essential to effective decision-making on this campus. Shared governance is a challenge for all institutions brave enough to implement it. Our system of shared governance is not perfect, but we are making solid progress. We will continue to do so, but only if all faculty see governance as a professional responsibility.

To quote from the AAUP Policy Documents & Reports (the red book), “Faculty members must be willing to participate in the decision-making processes over which a sound governance system gives them authority. As the Association’s Statement on Professional Ethics says, faculty members must “accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.” If they do not, authority will drift away from them, since someone must exercise it, and if members of the faculty do not, others will.” (AAUP, p. 226)

The question for UDM faculty is what authority will take your place if you choose not to contribute? Participation on the part of senior faculty who have been here, have institutional memory, who know where UDM has been and can put it all in perspective is key. Participation on the part of newer faculty provides the necessary opportunity to learn the history of shared governance and what it means here at UDM and to meet faculty from other programs. As fewer and fewer faculty take part, the faculty voice in curricular issues gets quieter and quieter. We all know how overextended we are, but all faculty members, senior and junior, need to be encouraged and motivated to volunteer some time to sit on an MFA Committee, a University Team or get involved whenever opportunities arise. It’s a promise we made seven years ago that we need to keep for our good and the good of the entire UDM community.

Items in this newsletter include: a current list of MFA representatives, as well as McNichols Committees, ad hoc Committees and University Teams (pages 1-2); a report on Core Curriculum progress (page 2); a thank you to outgoing MFA president Matt Mio and a special column written by former MFA president and current MFA CLAE representative Carol Weisfeld (page 3); a description of the Shared Governance Clearinghouse and a report on program review (page 4); and a summary of how a curricular proposal can become policy (page 5).

MFA Representatives for the 14-15 Academic Year

School of Architecture: Allegra Pitera, Noah Resnick

College of Business Administration: Terry Howard, Evan Peterson
College of Engineering and Science: Jeffe Boats, Stephanie Conant, Mustafa Demir, Jacob Kagey, Matt Mio

College of Health Professions: Maureen Anthony, Rosanne Burson, Tom Fockler, Kathy Moran, Kate Walters, Carmon Weekes

Library: Julia Eisenstein, Jill Turner

College of Liberal Arts and Education: Steve Abell, Rita Barrios, Jocelyn Bennett-Garraway, Laurie Britt-Smith, Harold Greene, Todd Hibbard, Dave Koukal, Carol Weisfeld, Chuck Wilson

MFA Executive Committee: Julia Eisenstein, President; Laurie Britt-Smith, Vice President; Stephanie Conant, Secretary; Matt Mio, Communications; Noah Resnick, Parliamentarian

McNichols Committees address important crosscutting academic concerns and are standing committees of the MFA: Graduate Program Review; Graduate Retention and Standards; Undergraduate Program Review; Undergraduate Retention; Undergraduate Standards; Core Curriculum

Ad hoc Committees are generated to complete a specific task: McNichols Tenure and Promotion; Core Curriculum Implementation Committee

University Teams involve representation from across UDM, including our professional schools: Assessment; Budget; Facilities, Planning, Standards and Safety; Faculty Development; Information Technology; Mission/Urban/Social Justice; Strategic Planning

Core Curriculum Update

By Julia Eisenstein, MFA President and Laurie Britt-Smith, MFA Vice President

As the Plain Dealer goes to print, the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC) is finishing up its final report to the MFA. The final report will recommend courses for inclusion in the new learning outcomes-based core curriculum. The amount of work by the CCIC, the college curricular committees, and those faculty who submitted courses for consideration has been astounding. The process of reviewing course submissions and communicating with faculty regarding course submissions has been a monumental task. At times the process may have seemed confusing and time-consuming. Remember however, a new core curriculum is being created virtually from scratch. There are bound to be growing pains. Nothing worthwhile comes easily. Making sure that this initial foundational core meets the standards that have been set for it is the motivating factor in requesting additional information or a clearer
connection between course work and outcomes. All the committees are working to better define what the outcomes mean and what they will look like in practice. It is better to be as careful as possible now rather than rush through and create more issues and additional setbacks later. To the entire UDM community, thank you for your involvement, your interest, and your patience as we continue on this journey.

With Appreciation and Admiration – Thank You Professor Matt Mio!

By Julia Eisenstein, MFA President

After six years of service as President of the McNichols Faculty Assembly, Professor Matt Mio made the decision to step down from that role. Throughout his tenure, Professor Mio presided over more than 100 MFA meetings, more than 50 Shared Governance Clearinghouse meetings and attended at least 15 Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees meetings. He steered the MFA through over 50 program reviews, the approval of 24 new academic policies, the creation of 21 new minors, 7 new degree programs, and 6 new certificate programs. His leadership has seen us through the selection of a new President of the University as well as the Provost. He has guided the faculty through such politically sensitive issues as the postponement of annual Program Review, the administration decision to censor web links from UDM web pages, ongoing evolution of the Core Curriculum, and most recently the suspension of committee work due to union contract negotiations.

Professor Mio’s steadfast commitment to shared governance has been unwavering no matter how many challenges arose (and they seemed to arise quite often). Professor Mio’s keen intelligence and confidence-inspiring professional manner made the job of MFA President look easy when even the most straightforward of undertakings were fraught with complications. MFA meetings were always more interesting when peppered with Professor Mio’s terrific sense of humor and his more than occasional reference to Halloween or the Detroit Tigers. And through it all he remained dedicated to his teaching and his students. It is no wonder that Professor Mio is so highly regarded by all who know him.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with Professor Mio. We have all been fortunate to have him as MFA President for the last six years. That good fortune continues as Mio represents the College of Engineering and Science on the MFA and serves as the MFA Communications Officer. I look forward to working with Professor Mio in these roles. Thank you Professor Matt Mio! Job well done!

The Legacies of Academe

By Carol Weisfeld, MFA representative from the College of Liberal Arts and Education

When university faculty in the USA first organized their ranks in 1915, it was largely an effort to protect academic freedom, mainly by affirming the importance of tenure and the processes related to promotion and tenure decisions. One of the principles that became established, gradually, was that decisions about faculty status (rank and tenure) ought to be made by a faculty member’s peers. Best
practice eventually became well-established: faculty made recommendations regarding promotion and tenure, and administrative leadership made final decisions, ordinarily confirming decisions made by faculty committees. Administrators concurred with faculty recommendations except in unusual situations, and in those unusual situations administrators would meet and confer with faculty committees, to keep decision-making fair and impartial and transparent.

These early formulations of shared governance worked well and served the academy well. Gradually faculty authority became established in the areas of curriculum and standards as well, within the same shared governance design. These and other academic practices are described in the Redbook of the American Association of University Professors (2014, available online at AAUP.org); the principles are endorsed by all major academic associations and labor organizations, including the NEA, our affiliate at UDM.

Here we are in our seventh year of managing our decisions within a comprehensive shared governance framework. Our biggest current challenge is the transition to a new core curriculum. Many of us have submitted courses for approval, to faculty committees charged with deciding whether or not our courses meet stated objectives. Some of us will have our course proposals rejected and find ourselves disagreeing with our colleagues’ judgments. There is an appeal process designed for possible use in this situation. This is indeed where I find myself as I write this article; two of my course proposals have been turned back by a faculty committee. I am unhappy with the decisions, but I strongly defend the underlying process of faculty decision-making and control of the curriculum. Best practice demands that faculty make these curricular decisions, and that administrators not be asked to intervene in the process. Having a course turned down is losing a battle. Keeping curricular decision-making with faculty, in the framework of shared governance, is winning the war.

What is the Shared Governance Clearinghouse?

Early in the pilot period, it became clear to the Provost/VPAA and the MFA Executive Committee that the original structure of Shared Governance lacked a central body. While many of the Committees and Teams report to the Provost/VPAA and MFA, no body existed to collect submitted proposals and send them to the proper group. The Shared Governance Clearinghouse was generated to remedy this situation and allow for monthly discussions between MFA officers and the Provost/VPAA. If you have an item for discussion at the SGCH, send a message to mfa@udmercy.edu and we’ll transmit it to the Committee or Team best suited to discuss it.

Program Review 14-15

By Julia Eisenstein, MFA President

In addition to its curricular and standards duties, the MFA is also in charge of shepherding UDM’s annual program review process. In 13-14, Architecture, Social Work, Software Engineering (Bachelors and Masters), Communication Studies, Liberal Studies (Bachelors and Masters) and Product Development were reviewed. A new Masters program in Environmental Engineering was also reviewed. As part of the University Strategic Plan, the Combined Undergraduate and Graduate Program Review Committees evaluated and drafted a revision of the Academic Program Review Self-Study template.

In 14-15, the following undergraduate programs are scheduled for review: Accounting, Business Administration, Economics, Financial Economics,
Sociology, Criminal Justice, Health Services, Health Services Administration, Honors and Language and Cultural Training (certificate). The following graduate programs are scheduled for review: Business Administration, Counseling (Addictions, Community and School), Economics, Financial Economics, Criminal Justice, and Health Services Administration.

The schedule for the second cycle of program review is available on the Shared Governance web page under Adopted Proposals (http://www.udmercy.edu/governance/proposals/adopted-proposals/pdf/Program_Review_Schedule.pdf)

How a Curricular Proposal Becomes a Policy at UDM

According to the founding documents of Shared Governance, the MFA is in charge of all curricular matters on the McNichols campus. New proposals include certificates, minors, degrees or other matters of academic standards. What follows is a summary of the process from idea to policy:

1. Generation of a curricular proposal by an individual or committee; proposal must follow the adopted guidelines for its type (i.e., minor, new degree program)

2. Proposal approved by the faculty of involved Departments

3. Proposal approved by the college/school curriculum committees and Deans of involved academic units

4. Proposal sent to the Shared Governance Clearinghouse (SGCH)

5. SGCH determines the Committee or Team needed to vet the proposal (i.e., minors are handled by Undergrad Standards, but new degree programs are examined by Undergrad/Grad Program Review)

6. Committee or Team recommendation voted upon by the MFA

7. MFA sends the recommended proposal to the Academic Vice President for administrative approval by the Academic Leadership Team, President’s Council and, if needed, the Board of Trustees

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding this Process:

What if changes to a proposal are requested?
Amendments to proposals can be requested at any stage and are usually managed by the original authors.

How long might the above process take?
Most Committees and Teams meet at least once a month throughout the academic year; the MFA meets once every two weeks. The minimum amount of time for a proposal to travel from the SGCH to final implementation of policy is one academic year. Some proposals travel faster (minors) than others (new degrees), owing to the length of the proposals and the due diligence needed to review for and ensure academic rigor. All new degree program proposals submitted to the Program Review Committee on or before September 15 will be reviewed by the Committee in Term I; proposals received on or before January 15 will be reviewed during Term II.

Where can I find the guidelines for preparing my proposal? Check out the link below to find the adopted polices of the MFA, which includes both guideline documents and previously-approved proposals:

udmercy.edu/governance/proposals/adopted-policies