

November 9, 2006

UWOFA

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Academic Governance and the Faculty Voice

Within each Faculty and School academic matters are overseen by a Faculty Council consisting primarily of its faculty members. At the university level the Senate fulfills a similar role. The dominant role of faculty members in Senate and Faculty Councils reflects the need for self-governance and for faculty expertise in decisions on academic matters. Faculty members can participate effectively as they are guaranteed academic freedom and so are able to speak and vote freely.

These bodies typically include representatives from the administrative staff and student bodies. Staff and student participation allows consideration of the concerns of these important groups. Staff and student representation, however, is relatively small. In the case of staff, this is because their work is administrative rather than academic. Also, the employment contract between staff and the employer does not provide academic freedom and so may constrain these employees' ability to speak and vote freely. Students have their own councils within which they participate in matters related to student governance.

With these considerations in mind, **we bring to your attention a current proposal at the Richard Ivey School of Business, put forward by the Ivey School's administration, to substantially alter the balance between faculty and non-faculty Council members.** The proposal is of considerable concern to faculty within the School. It will come to a vote in the form of a constitutional amendment at the School's Faculty Council, known as Business Council, on November 14.

The proposal would increase the number of voting staff members on Council from 6 to 15. Of the added 9 positions, 3 are ex-officio and 6 are appointed by the Dean. The 6 appointees would serve one-year terms on Council at the pleasure of the Dean, which could limit their ability to vote and speak independently. Unlike some other Faculty Councils (such as Law) where staff members may be asked to attend meetings in a non-voting capacity to provide expertise on specific issues, these Ivey staff members would have full voting rights. The number of voting student members is also slated for increase, from 8 to 11. Meanwhile, faculty representation could be reduced, as Part-Time and visiting faculty members will lose their place on Council; however, faculty members with Full-Time joint appointments would be explicitly included.

To put these proposed changes in perspective, we provide a table (verso) showing the composition of Councils in the different UWO Faculties. The numbers shown are for voting members. The proposed changes in the Business Council would give it a markedly different structure from Councils in other Faculties. **The number of voting non-faculty members would far exceed that elsewhere**, at 26 compared to the mean of 10 (or even the maximum of 15) in other Faculty Councils. The disproportion in staff representation would be even greater, with the number of voting staff members double the maximum elsewhere.

The proposal also calls for a change in quorum that could further weaken the voice of faculty in Council. Quorum is currently 50% of the voting membership of almost 100 Full-Time plus all Part-Time faculty members with academic rank. The amendment would reduce quorum to 25 (irrespective of the total number of faculty members) and require a minimum of only 13 faculty members. It will be possible, then, to have all 14 staff members and only 13 faculty members attend, in which case academic decisions could be made with faculty members in a numerical minority.

This proposal to restructure the Business Council can be passed by a simple majority of attending voters. However, **the proposal includes a provision that would require a two-thirds majority to pass any future constitutional changes.** If passed, then, these changes would be extremely difficult to undo.

The proposal would effectively reduce the voice of faculty at Ivey and set a worrisome precedent for governance reform on campus. It remains to be seen whether it will find traction at Business Council. The aim of this bulletin is to provide relevant background information for Ivey faculty members who will be asked to vote on this proposal on November 14 and also for members of Senate, whose approval is ultimately required for such constitutional changes.

The Composition of Voting Members on Faculty Councils

	Quorum	Staff			Students (elected & ex-officio)	Faculty	
		elected	ex-officio & appointed	Total		full-time	part-time
Business (current)	50% of voting members, except in summer	4	2	6	8	94	all w/ academic rank
Business (proposed)	25, of which 13 are Ivey faculty	4	11	15	11	94	0
Arts & Humanities	25% of Council and of A&H members	1	1	2	6	148	16
Education	1/3 of voting members	4	1	5	6	50	0
Engineering	30 members of Council	2	2	4	6	91	all w/ rank of adjunct professor
Health Sciences	25 voting members	7	0	7	7	122	7
FIMS	25% of voting members	3	0	3	6	36	2
Law	50% of voting members for constitutional amendments	1	1	2	10	31	0
Medicine & Dentistry	40 voting members	3	0	3	12	all w/ academic rank	0
Music	1/3 of full-time faculty in Music	1	0	1	4	42	4
Science	25% of Council members	1	1	2	2	217	0
Social Science	40 members of Council	1	0	1	6	245	0

Notes: Full-time faculty numbers are the 2005-06 totals of Full-Time faculty members within the Faculties plus external faculty representatives elected from other Faculties and Affiliated Colleges. Staff numbers include librarians. Ex-officio university-level administrators are excluded. Some numbers are approximate. Please see the Faculty Constitutions at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/senate/councils/> for full details.

Comments on these issues? Please let us know: UWOFA, Elborn College, Room 2120. (519) 661-3016 Fax 661-3946 uwofa@uwo.ca . Previous bulletins, along with other information about UWOFA and faculty life at Western, can be found on our web site: <http://www.uwofa.ca>