



Responses to Some Concerns Regarding Proposed Governance Reforms January 2024

General Principles Guiding the AAUP Chapter's Proposed Governance Reforms

Before responding to the specific queries and criticisms of our reform proposals, we refer to the general principles guiding them. They are derived from the AAUP's *Policy Documents and Reports* (Red Book), specifically the [1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#), the [1967 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#), and the [1972 Role of the Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters](#). Some of the most relevant passages of these policy documents for the current reforms are included here:

- “These considerations make still more clear the nature of the relationship between university trustees and members of university faculties. The latter are the appointees, but not in any proper sense the employees, of the former. For, once appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene.” (Red Book, 6)
- “Effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communication among the components of a college or university. ... The allocation of resources among competing demands is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty.” (Red Book, 119)
- “Faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal.” (Red Book, 121)
- “The faculty should actively participate in the determination of policies and procedures governing salary increases.” (Red Book, 121)
- “The faculty should participate both in the preparation of the total institutional budget and (within the framework of the total budget) in decisions relevant to the further apportioning of its specific fiscal divisions (salaries, academic programs, tuition, physical plant and grounds, and so on). The soundness of resulting decisions should be enhanced if an elected representative committee of the faculty participates in deciding on the overall allocation of institutional resources and the proportion to be devoted directly to the academic program. This committee should be given access to all information that it requires to perform its task effectively, and it should have the opportunity to confer periodically with representatives of the administration and governing board. Such an institution-level body, representative of the entire faculty, can play an important part in mediating the financial needs and the demands of different groups within the faculty and can be of significant assistance to the administration in

resolving impasses that may arise when a large variety of demands are made on necessarily limited resources.” (Red Book, 289)

Inasmuch as Wesleyan’s by-laws do not reflect that status or extend shared governance to determining faculty lines, the budgetary process, or policy and procedures related to salary increases, we believe that the by-laws and policies should be reformed.

We offer the following responses and revisions to our reforms in the hope of making substantial near-term improvements to Wesleyan’s governance.

Some Concerns and Our Responses

I. Questions about the Faculty Resources Committee Proposal:

Consent vs. Advise: *At peer institutions, similar committees only have an advisory role. Do they work well at other institutions? If only advisory, will the committees be useful/relevant?*

- The revised proposal uses the language of “advise” as appropriate.
- Several peer schools have a great deal of success with their committees, even when the committees only advise. The committees share their decisions and their rationale with the entire Faculty, and when the Administration disagrees with the recommendations of the committee, the Administration gives a written explanation for their own rationale. Notice that such a system:
 - Provides increased transparency to the process by explaining recommendations for line allocations
 - Collects more, and more meaningful, information on Faculty/Department/Division priorities
 - Clarifies (both from the Faculty and the Administration) what the perceived needs and priorities of the academic mission are. Consequently, departments can refine their own requests for lines, etc.
- Current standing committees at Wesleyan (Advisory, EPC) have certain roles that are only advisory, but nonetheless crucial to both the running of the University and giving meaningful agency to the Faculty. The FRC and BC can and will operate similarly.

Need for the FRC: *Why does the Faculty need the new committees proposed?*

- According to AAUP principles, the Faculty are co-governors of the institution with the Trustees, and faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty matter. Moreover, the power to set the curriculum and courses of study (with the concurrence of the President) is

explicitly granted to the Faculty in the by-laws of the University. Decisions on which departments will hire new colleagues is, fundamentally, a decision on the future of the curriculum and so **requires** our expertise and input. Allocating faculty resources, like allocating budgetary resources, is a shared responsibility with the faculty.

- If the Faculty do not have a meaningful say in the process of line allocation, this power is undermined.
- Effective planning for the composition of the faculty demands the widest possible exchange of information.
- The FRC is not a controversial proposal, even if further discussion on structure is warranted. It is also not unprecedented – the expansion of the faculty under VPAs Boyd and Brown charged the EPC to make recommendations on how an additional twenty lines should be allocated across campus.
- The FRC fills an explicit and demonstrable need: it allows the Faculty to execute these granted powers that EPC or other Faculty committees are unable to do in practice.
- Delegating or abrogating our role in constructing the Faculty in the past has led to regrettable (though predictable) outcomes, such as increased reliance on NTT Faculty and visitors.

Lack of Expertise: *There is a concern that rotating faculty members off of the FRC will result in a group that lacks the necessary background knowledge to engage in long-term strategic planning.*

- The FRC will only increase Faculty understanding on such delicate issues, and increase the number of faculty familiar with them. All the standing committees face the challenge of preserving institutional memory and expertise. Just as the CBC, EPC, and Advisory are able to meet this challenge despite rotating rosters, the FRC will do likewise.
- The Faculty possess precisely the expertise and knowledge to be making these decisions. The President, Deans and Provost have no special expertise or background knowledge on these matters beyond that of the faculty or their elected delegates. If the administration possesses information not disclosed to the faculty, as co-governors they are obliged to share it with the Faculty.

Representation on Committee: *What will the committee look like? Will staff/students be represented?*

- The committee should have a broad representation of faculty and students in order to draw from the widest range of views possible and thus offer the most sound advice and recommendations about the composition of the faculty. The revised draft proposes a committee of 9: three tenured faculty from three different divisions; three untenured faculty from three different divisions; two continuing faculty from any division; and one undergraduate student.

Fear of Pressure / Conflicts of Interest / Division / Unrest: *Will FRC members face pressure/lobbying/harassment from colleagues? Will they put the needs of their own Departments above the needs of the University as a whole?*

- The current process is also susceptible to conflicts of interest but lacks transparency.
- The current process is vulnerable to lobbying. Individual units may be tempted to curry favor with decision-makers in the hopes that this might increase the likelihood of their line request being approved. Because the proposed revision increases the size of the committee's membership, individual attempts at lobbying will be fruitless. Additionally, the burden of decision-making will be diminished by equally distributing it between all committee members. A larger committee should produce a trustworthy decision-making process.
- In a committee with open and minuted procedures, and one that reports annually to the Faculty, temptations to lobby or advocate for specific programs by individual committee members can be observed and held in check. Experience on committees suggests that the threat of opprobrium from other committee members will hold the partiality of individual committee members at bay.
- It should be understood that members of the committee are delegates of the Faculty as a whole, not representatives of specific divisions or programs. If necessary, this should be made explicit. Harassment by colleagues for carrying out these duties is a violation of academic freedom and University policy and should be reported to the relevant department chairs, Deans, or FCRR. Hypothetical fears of pressure or lobbying are not grounds to shield junior faculty from collegiality.

The FRC is redundant, because the Deans represent the interests of the Faculty in hiring discussions.

- First, note these proposals are not a criticism of any individual or collection of individuals holding any particular positions. Criticism is intended only for the current **process**.
- The lack of transparency in the current process must be eliminated, and the FRC provides a practical way to do just this. Departments and Faculty have the right (and the obligation) to understand:
 - which requests for lines are successful and why,
 - what the current academic priorities of the institution are,
 - how many lines and how many line-requests exist year to year.
- The FRC is not redundant, because the Faculty do not have agency in exercising their power to determine courses of study. The FRC fills this need.
- The Deans are appointees of the Provost and answer to the administration; they are not elected delegates of the faculty.

II. Questions about the CBC proposal:

CBC charge: *The CBC already has the power of consent on the composition of the peer group, if not the compensation target within the peer group. From the University By-Laws, this appears to be the prerogative of the Board of Trustees.*

- The 2023-24 Faculty handbook was only recently updated and made public, so the earlier draft reform of the CBC contained wording related to “Consulting and advising” the President, Provost, and Treasurer on the composition of the budget as it relates to compensation and benefits that is now in the new handbook. Our revised CBC reform reflects these changes.
- There is no language in the current (2023-24) Handbook giving the CBC a voice in the composition of the compensation peer group. It is also missing language about the CBC having a voice in the making of compensation and benefits policy or in the operations of Human Resources, which administers salaries and benefits. This language has been included in the revised draft.
- AAUP principles are that “faculty should actively participate in the determination of policies and procedures governing salary increases.” The composition of the compensation peer group and the compensation target within the peer group (not individual salary levels) are policies and procedures that govern salary increases. Our understanding is that this doesn’t infringe on any Board of Trustee prerogatives. If the FEC, President and Trustees believe it does, they should make clear which specific ones, and if so, why our By-Laws should violate fundamental AAUP principles.

III. Questions about the Budget Committee proposal:

The BC is redundant, because Wesleyan already has CBC and BPC.

- BPC is not a standing committee and could disappear at any moment. Moreover, its input is extremely limited to just discussions around new money. In practice it involves no discussion of long-term planning or institutional goals.
- According to AAUP principles, “faculty should participate both in the preparation of the total institutional budget and (within the framework of the total budget) in decisions relevant to the further apportioning of its specific fiscal divisions in decisions relevant to the further apportioning of its specific fiscal divisions (salaries, academic programs, tuition, physical plant and grounds, and so on). The soundness of resulting decisions should be enhanced if an elected representative committee of the faculty participates in deciding on the overall allocation of institutional resources and the proportion to be devoted directly to the academic program.”
- Wesleyan has no elected faculty standing committee involved in preparing and apportioning the annual budget in its totality.

- The proposed Budget Committee does not overlap meaningfully with CBC; CBC is only concerned with the compensation and benefits of Faculty and the budget pool devoted to this single expense. The BC instead focuses on setting the priorities of spending for the institution as a whole.

IV. General questions and concerns about the reforms:

Representation: *How will small departments/programs be fairly represented on the committee?*

- We anticipate the FRC being large (6 faculty members, two from each division; 2 continuing faculty members from any division; and one undergraduate student), so as to build faculty trust in its decisions, lower the overall burden to individual FRC members, and give voice to all departments, programs, centers, etc. [Peer institutions](#) have similar bodies with as few as 3 to many as 9 faculty members. The current proposal strikes a good balance at 8.
- Similar to other committees, prohibiting multiple members from a single department offers a practical solution to representation concerns.
- We view input from all faculty, as well as staff and students as extremely valuable and include members from all three groups on the BC. Accordingly, our revised draft envisions a BC of nine: six members of the faculty, two from each division, one undergraduate student, one graduate student, and one member of staff.

Practical Concerns: *Will course relief be offered? Will faculty be over-burdened by more service responsibilities?*

- Increasing the service burden on the Faculty should not be undertaken lightly. However, this is important and meaningful work that fills a glaring hole in the governance of the institution. These provide a voice to the Faculty, students and staff and increase transparency in decision-making.
- Faculty are willing to serve on committees that matter, and can choose for themselves if they believe in the importance of a new committee on line allocation or budget by voting for it.
- Wesleyan has some 430 faculty members and only 9 elected standing committees, councils, and boards on which faculty serve. Our liberal arts [peer institutions](#) have a significantly greater number of such service bodies with a correspondingly smaller faculty, e.g.:
 - Amherst has 307 faculty and some 20 service bodies
 - Swarthmore has 207 faculty and 39 service bodies
 - Wellesley has 346 faculty and 25 service bodies
 - Williams has 360 faculty and 25 service bodies

The service burden at Wesleyan is similar to some of the research universities in our peer group, like [Brown and Dartmouth](#), even though we have but a tiny fraction of their graduate students and no professional schools: Dartmouth has 943 faculty and 22 service bodies, while

Brown has 819 faculty and 20 service bodies—excluded in these counts are medical/professional school committees, councils, and boards.

- The goal should not be *more* committees per se but rather *enough* committees for a shared governance structure that distributes the labor more evenly across a more-engaged and empowered faculty body. Right now we have some severely overburdened committees (EPC), ones with a seasonal workload (Honor Committee) and ones with only a very sporadic workload (FCRR). The work of the FRC will be primarily limited to the spring semester. It will be a condensed but manageable undertaking by a committee of nine members.