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November 2, 2006

UMM Constitution Revision Committee
Meeting # 10: October 30, 2006

Present: M.E. Bezanson (Chair), B. Ahern, B. Jasper, M. Korth (acting secretary), S. Olson-Loy, G. Rudney, G. Thorson, and R. Webb

G. Donovan, T. McRoberts, and K. Strissel were not able to be at this meeting.

The chair proposed that we group the key issues identified at the last meeting into a few categories. There was some discussion of the four categories Korth had proposed at the end of the last meeting. (Those four were: 1) committee structure, 2) assembly and committee membership, 3) procedures and how things are organized, and 4) authority, power and responsibility in the constitution.) Some thought the first two categories are workable but the fourth is too broad. There followed a discussion of how these groupings were to be used at a forum and varying views were expressed. Are they the actual topics for discussion or merely headers for organizing issues?

We ran through the list and assigned each issue to a category. A few issues were assigned to more than one category. Issues #4 and #20 were combined and we added another issue, #25.

Constitutional Issues

(original issue numbers kept for tracking purposes)

Category: Structure

4. Clarify the duties and composition of the Executive Committee. Should the Executive Committee be a steering committee that would help coordinate the work of the campus governance committees? Is this already the function of the Executive Committee? (Also an Authority issue.)
9. Committee jurisdiction and reform—a great deal of discussion followed about the scope and authority of such committees as the Campus Resources and Planning Committee and how that has changed over time. One concern is that a committee such as the Campus Resources and Planning Committee has become an overworked committee, dealing with financial issues and a host of planning matters. Perhaps there needs to be reconsideration of how strategic planning and budgetary matters are addressed in our committee structure. (Also Authority)
10. The role of the Consultative and the Faculty Affairs Committees and their relationship to each other needs clarification in the revised constitution.
19. The role of Assembly and Adjunct committees needs to be clarified. Indeed, there is one suggestion that these distinctions of Assembly and Adjunct should no longer be maintained.

21. Important institutional processes embedded (i.e. implementation of the student conduct) in campus committees (“Assembly,” ad hoc and sub committees). Much of this is not clarified in our constitution.
22. The role of the Consultative Committee and its jurisdiction. The Consultative Committee was considered to be a “grievance committee” that was a sounding board for the campus community. Today, senior administrators consult with the Consultative Committee on key appointments. The committee also continues to be a sounding board for concerns expressed by all groups within the campus community. In part this is because it is an elective committee with representation from the entire campus community.

Category: Membership

1. Term limits of students, faculty and staff on committees—there followed a brief discussion of some examples where student terms are limited to the point where it is very difficult to develop some knowledge on key committees, such as the Scholastic and Curriculum committees. This is also true for faculty and staff.
2. Voting on committees and the (voting) role of *ex officio* membership needs to be clarified.
3. Staff status on committees—both voting and eligibility.
8. Membership on Campus Committees--another member observed that the United Staff Association and the MCSA are not mentioned in the constitution, but they select their membership on committees. In fact, both USA and MCSA select their membership and forward their selections to the Executive Committee, which accepts them for placement on committees.
13. Membership in the Assembly and the process of removing members who do not participate needs to be addressed.

Category: Authority

5. The role of the Vice Chancellors Group—it currently is not identified in the constitution and yet has developed into a body with considerable authority.
6. The role of the Division Chairs in the governance process. Note: one member commented that the constitution does describe the authority of the Division Chairs but that authority has been bypassed in recent years.
17. Divisional authority needs to be clarified. The relationship of administrators to the campus governance system requires further clarification.
23. The level of responsibility of committees. Can they really effect legislation and actions or are they simply consulted without any impact?

25. What is the appropriate separation of powers between the campus assembly and the administration? What about MCSA?

Category: Processes

7. The Constitution is outdated in substance and practice—one member observed that there has been both structural changes and practices at UMM that are at variance with our constitution.
11. What should it take to amend the constitution and bylaws?
12. What constitutes a quorum at Assembly meetings?
14. How do we clarify the document when offices or units become outdated or change?
15. How do we change the constitution when titles and responsibilities change?
16. Outdated time frames for review of staff—the Chancellors review occurring every seven years as an example. From that, there followed considerable discussion about mandated reviews of senior administrators and how that has fallen by the wayside. Historically, administrative reviews were commonplace, at one time even at the director level. That fell by the wayside, but still there is the expectation that Division Chairs and higher would undergo periodic reviews. The practice has become uneven in its application.
18. The nature of committee meetings—the standard should be that meetings are open to all, with written records.

Issue #24 was intentionally set aside.

24. One member of the committee observed that the Consultative and Executive Committees, both of which are elected, set agendas and set meeting dates. Some viewed this as fairly narrow interpretation of the constitution.

There was discussion about the limits on administrative authority. It was asserted that the chancellor can “formulate” policy but the campus assembly can “establish” policy. A key question might be: when can the administration act unilaterally?

There was discussion as to whether MCSA and USA ought to be recognized as governance bodies in the constitution. Most USA members are represented by a union so it may be inappropriate to think of USA as part of the governance system at UMM.

The chair indicated she would see that items 1-25 are put into a grid and distributed to members. At the next meeting, we will discuss how to organize forums (including a timeframe for them).