Strengthening the CAS Faculty’s Participation in University Processes for the Development and Approval of University-wide Academic Policies

TO: CAS Faculty
FROM: CAS Academic Policy Committee
Date: October 2015

Background: This proposal stems from the Academic Policy Committee’s discussion of concerns about faculty governance that came to light in 2015-2016, when the University first implemented a new process for Development and Approval of Academic Policies with broad applicability to students and faculty across BU’s schools and colleges.

That new eDAPP process (Appendix A) provides for consultation of school and college faculties during the drafting and comment phases of policy development. Voting on approval is, however, limited to the appropriate University Council Committee(s), which may include members from CAS, and to the University Council itself, where CAS is represented by our Dean and elected Faculty Council Representatives. The APC’s main concern, in conducting a year-end review of policymaking to date under eDAPP auspices, was thus to help ensure that CAS faculty are as reliably informed about pending university-wide policy proposals as about proposals internal to CAS, and that the views of the CAS Faculty, especially on major policies and policy revisions, are systematically solicited, aired, debated, acknowledged, and reflected in formal comments, deliberations, and votes at the University level. As a result of our discussions, including a series of conversations to which the APC invited CAS Faculty Council Representatives and other faculty leaders, we identified four key lessons from experience and corresponding areas where we believe that action is needed to improve on eDAPP’s trial run:

1. Practices of faculty governance that have served the College well in regard to CAS-specific policies can also support strong participation of the CAS faculty in university-wide policymaking, but only if we take deliberate and explicit steps to integrate and coordinate those long-standing practices with the new reality and specifics of the eDAPP process.

2. In particular, the role of our CAS Faculty Representatives as voting members in the faculty majority of the recently reconstituted University Council has been enhanced in the eDAPP context, but without attendant gains in prominence and connectedness within CAS governance structures and without clear expectations and support for fulfillment of “Duties” specified in Article XII of the Faculty Council Constitution: “Representatives shall convey to the Faculty Council the views of colleagues in their Schools or Colleges. Representatives shall make periodic, public reports of Faculty Council activities to the Schools or Colleges and shall endeavor to elicit free and general discussion of all appropriate matters. Representatives shall serve the welfare of the entire faculty of Boston University.”
3. As noted by APC members who have also served on University policy-drafting bodies, the size and diversity of CAS, as well as the many conflicting claims on our faculty’s time and attention, present a special communications challenge for any individual or group seeking to consult the full CAS Faculty on evolving policy documents as they move through the eDAPP pipeline.

4. Even if CAS succeeds in meeting the needs identified in #1-3 for coordinated processes, well-delineated responsibilities, and improved channels of communication, eDAPP’s prescribed 15-day window for comment on proposals by the Faculty Council and Council of Deans may, on occasion, prove too narrow. While we fully endorse nimble and timely approval of policies intended to improve on the status quo, we also believe that time pressures alone should not foreclose the possibility of a face-to-face Faculty Meeting when that forum for discussion in the presence of CAS University Council members is warranted, e.g., by the importance and potential impact of a particular major policy.

**Proposed:** That the College of Arts & Sciences adopt the following measures to strengthen the CAS faculty’s participation in University processes for the development and approval of University-wide academic policies and programs:

1. Integrate the central deliberative bodies and forums (APC, Faculty Meeting) of faculty governance on which CAS has historically relied with the eDAPP process.

Suggested Implementation:

extend the CAS Academic Policy Committee’s responsibility for reviewing CAS educational policy proposals to include review of all policies generated through the eDAPP process. (This would formalize last year’s ad hoc practice.)

Delegate authority to the APC to distinguish between “major” policies clearly warranting viva voce discussion in a CAS Faculty Meeting, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, “minor” policies including those that so closely mirror current CAS policies as to be “new” only in their University-wide application. Such “minor” policies would be posted in full and summarized in the APC’s Report on the next Faculty Meeting agenda, with an invitation to address any questions or comments to CAS members of the relevant policy-drafting body or to our CAS Faculty Council Representatives.

For a third, intermediate category of proposals — modest in scope and impact, but without precedent in CAS — authorize the APC and Faculty Council Reps to collaborate in polling the Faculty electronically (see #3 below), including on the question of whether Faculty meeting discussion would be desirable.

2. Define, promote, and support the responsibility of the College’s Faculty Council Representatives for ascertaining and conveying the views and recommendations
of the CAS faculty to policy drafting bodies, the Faculty Council, and the University Council.

Suggested Implementation:

Work with Faculty Council leadership to encourage CAS faculty colleagues to stand for election to the Council. Consider administering APC and CAS Faculty Council elections concurrently in late Spring, using a single ballot.

Schedule a face-to-face meeting of CAS Faculty Council Representatives with the CAS Academic Policy Committee at the beginning of each academic year, and designate one member of each group to keep the other apprised of policy discussions that may be unfolding in parallel.

Post a written report from the Faculty Council with other back-up materials for CAS Faculty Meetings.

Ensure that at least one CAS Faculty Council Representative is present at every CAS Faculty Meeting to report on matters pending in the Council and hear debate of proposed academic policies, programs, and initiatives.

3. Provide a simple online tool, to be administered by a member of the Dean’s office staff, that responsible CAS parties in the University eDAPP process can use at key junctures to survey the CAS faculty electronically.

Suggested Implementation:
Adapt the College of Engineering’s Qualtrics survey, which combines a five-point Likert scale with a comment box.

“Responsible Parties” refers in this context to the following:

- CAS members of the drafting body for a particular policy;
- CAS Academic Policy Committee;
- CAS members of the Faculty Council and Council of Deans; and
- CAS members of University Council Committee(s) whose vote on the proposal will precede that of the University Council.

4. Recommend to the University leadership that a provision be created for extending the period for formal “comment” on proposals by the Faculty Council and Council of Deans in instances where 1) a major policy or change in policy or significant revision of a previously reviewed policy text is being proposed, and 2) despite best efforts, a face-to-face meeting of the CAS Faculty cannot be scheduled within the prescribed 15-day comment period.

Suggested Implementation:
The Dean will determine how best to communicate this recommendation.