Advisory Committee
Annual Report 2009-2010

Advisory Committee, 2009-2010:

Bob Morris (Chair)
Vicki Bartolini
John Beziis-Selfa (spring)
Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus (fall)
Jay Reiss
Janice Sklensky

In its first year of “slimmer” membership mandated by faculty legislation, now down to five members from seven, the Advisory Committee continued its tradition of: (a.) encouraging the use of existing committee structures as the best system for maintaining shared governance of the college, and (b.) promoting transparency in college decision making as the best way to foster trust within the community. This year, the Advisory Committee met twenty times, sent representatives to all of the President's Open Houses, to all Community Forums, and to all AAUP meetings, and met with the President, the Provost, members of the campus community, and members of standing committees on multiple occasions as described below. Here we describe the major public accomplishments of Advisory this year.

Facilitation of information-gathering for the Ad Hoc Committee as they created an "integrated financial and strategic plan" for the college.

The Advisory Committee helped to establish the Priorities and Planning Committee (PPC) last year in order to advise the President and the President’s Council on the critical decisions that would have to be made this year about financial priorities and about long-term planning for the college. With that broadly representative committee in place, Advisory's previous role to inform these decisions could be passed to PPC. At the end of September, the economic situation led the Board to establish an "Ad Hoc Committee" to formulate, in four months' time, an Integrated Strategic and Financial Plan that would be sustainable for the long term. In September, the Advisory Committee met with the President to help clarify the roles of the PPC and the Ad Hoc Committee in regards to making decisions about the financial plan for the college.

When the regular November Faculty Meeting was cancelled by Committee on Committees and Agenda (COCA) for lack of agenda items, AAUP requested that Advisory call a Committee of the Whole in which the faculty could discuss implications of a new financial plan on the academic program of the college. Given the short timeframe in which the Ad Hoc Committee would be working to formulate an integrated financial and strategic plan, Advisory and the President agreed that such a meeting would be valuable to clarify the process for faculty and to provide ideas to the Ad Hoc Committee. At Advisory’s request, the President called for a Special Faculty Meeting.

Advisory led the November 6, 2009, Special Faculty Meeting to focus on two possible elements of the integrated financial plan that would have direct impact on the academic program...
of the college -a faculty salary plan and growth of the student body. The meeting began with remarks from the President in which he outlined goals for the integrated financial plan, and clarified roles of the committees involved. He explained that while the Ad Hoc Committee was convened, PPC would be an advisory committee to it, and after the financial plan was approved and the Ad Hoc Committee disbanded in February, BAC would be responsible for short-term implementation of the integrated financial plan and PPC for long-term implementation. When the meeting reconvened as a Committee of the Whole, Advisory facilitated a discussion about the status of the faculty salary plan and about the implications of a gradual and modest increase in the student body. Members of the Committee on Economic Status explained the latest proposal for a faculty salary plan, submitted to but not accepted by the administration yet, and answered questions regarding it. Members of the PPC explained the reasons why a modest growth of the student body was, in their opinion, the best way to move the college back to a sustainable 12:1 student faculty ratio from the unsustainable 10:1 ratio it had become. The meeting ended with broad support for both the latest faculty salary plan and for the proposal to grow the student body. The Advisory Committee drafted a summary report detailing these views and the ideas that supported them, and presented it to the President and the Provost for consideration by the Ad Hoc Committee. The report was also circulated to the entire faculty.

In February, the Board accepted the integrated strategic and financial plan for the college put forth by the President and the Ad Hoc Committee. The plan includes a gradual and modest growth in the student body as one of the revenue-generating approaches to be used to fund the college’s four core priorities: building a new Science Center, growing financial aid, improving student experience through improving student residences, and adopting a new faculty salary plan. It also included a reduction in college personnel as one of the cost-saving approaches to be implemented.

First-Year Summer Orientation program

In the fall, Advisory learned that Provost Linda Eisenmann and Dean of Students Lee Williams and others were discussing establishment of a Summer Orientation Program for accepted first-year students as a means to decrease “summer melt” (that is, the number of accepted students who agree to come to Wheaton and then choose to go elsewhere at the last minute). In meetings with the Provost in January and February, Advisory learned more about this plan and expressed reservations that this initiative seemed so “top down.” Linda Eisenmann heard these concerns, and increased her outreach to faculty committees to seek advice on how to
implement a Summer Orientation as a pilot project. In addition to the FYS Steering Committee with whom she had already been in touch, Advisory recommended she speak with the Educational Policy Committee (for advising and curricular components), The Committee on Faculty Workload and Economic Status and AAUP (for workload issues), and the Department Chairs (for broad faculty representation and for communication). In February, Advisory met with the FYS Steering Committee and together agreed to lead a discussion at the March 5 Faculty Meeting to gather input about the Summer Orientation program. By March 5, the decision had been made to postpone the launch of the Summer Orientation program for at least a year, so the Advisory-led discussion at Faculty Meeting gathered ideas with more time for implementing them.

Federal Policies on Responsible Conduct of Research

At the February 19 Department Chairs Meeting, Fran Jeffries reported on new federal policies concerning proper training of “Responsible Conduct of Research” (RCR) for federally funded researchers. The Department Chairs and the Provost charged Advisory to work with Fran to bring Wheaton into full compliance with these new policies. Advisory met twice with Fran and consulted with Michael Berg from the Institutional Review Board to help finish the “working draft” version of this document necessary to be in compliance. The RCR working document is now available on the Provost’s website at http://wheatoncollege.edu/provost/policies/RCR_final_doc04_16_2010.pdf. Although these federal policies currently apply only to National Institutes of Health-funded and National Science Foundation-funded faculty and students, it is likely that these policies will eventually apply to all individuals funded by any US government agency. In addition to the RCR document, Federal grants agencies require that Wheaton have in place a “Policy on Maintenance of Integrity in Research” -effectively, a policy on research misconduct. The Advisory Committee will be working with Fran next year to craft such a policy and determine whether its implementation will require faculty legislation. Advisory will consult with all appropriate committees and with department chairs as it does so.

At the May 7 Faculty Meeting, Advisory reported on this item and solicited ideas on any other committees that should be consulted about it.

The Advisory Committee would like to thank the many colleagues who either joined us for meetings or informed our deliberations in some way this year. They include but are not limited to: Elita Pastra-Landis for the Provost’s office; John Miller, John Kricher and Debi Cato for the PPC; Anni Baker, Shari Morris, and Mark LeBlanc for the FYS Steering Committee; Michael Berg for the Institutional Review Board; Stephen Mathis for AAUP and for last year’s Task Force 1; John Gildea and Kirk Anderson for Committee on Faculty Workload and Economic Status; Laura Muller for the Tenure Committee; Pat Santilli, Registrar; and Fran Jeffries, Special Assistant to the Provost.

Respectfully submitted, for the Advisory Committee,

Bob Morris
Chair