



MEMO TO: Dave Frohnmayer  
MEMO FROM: Peter Gilkey  
DATE: 21 June 2009  
RE: Faculty Governance

I thought upon commencing my term as President of the UO Senate to write to you to share some thoughts I have about the nature of the office. Although I will be copying this to a few others, I am addressing them to you.

The ORS specify that the President and his subordinate officers are responsible for managing the everyday affairs of the University. Authority and responsibility are intertwined – it is not possible to manage the University by an assembly, by a committee, or by a senate. The ORS also specify that the President and the Faculty are responsible for curricular matters and the governance of the students. It is from that perspective that the UO Senate derives its present authority and the focus of its activity. I wrote at great length previously to you and Frank Stahl concerning my viewpoint on this matter and see no point in belaboring the matter as this is posted on the web.

The UO Senate is primarily a legislative body and has few executive functions. The main function of the Senate President is to set the agenda and to preside over the meetings of the Senate. Some executive duties flow from that – appointment of members of the Senate Rules Committee, Senate Budget Committee, and Senate Nominating Committee etc. The UO Senate President also serves ex officio on certain committees (Faculty Advisory Committee, Distinguished Service Committee etc). And it is his task to carry out certain legislatively mandated functions as well. But it is a very limited office. The functions of the Senate Vice President are even more limited – he chairs the Committee on Committees and serves ex officio on the Faculty Advisory Committee and Senate Executive Committee.

Over the years there has, perhaps, been a bit of confusion about those matters. The Senate Executive Committee, for example, has come to serve as a mini senate usurping the functions of the Senate Rules Committee and the Senate Nominating Committee. The membership of the SEC is specified to be the Senate President, the Senate Vice President, and the Secretary of the Senate. Other faculty and student senators can be added. I do not intend to add additional members this year. The SEC will consist of the 3 mandated persons. The only real task of the SEC is to advise the Senate President concerning the agenda. That function will be performed and I will also consult with the full Senate in this regard. There is also legislation which permits the SEC to fill vacancies on elected committees. The vacancy among the IFS Senators has already been filled with the enthusiastic support of Vice President Tublitz. Fortunately given the robust number of candidates in the recent election for the remaining elected committees, future vacancies can most likely be filled without the intervention of the SEC. Given reservations properly and subsequent to this action which were expressed by Senate Vice President Tublitz, I foresee involving the Senate Nominating Committee and subsequent confirmation by the

full Senate to fill vacancies which otherwise could not be filled on committees. No need to borrow trouble for the future in this regard as this is a remote contingency.

Let me now turn to more mundane matters of immediate import. During the summer months when the Senate is not in session and many of our faculty are away, the Faculty Advisory Committee and the Senate Budget Committee provide the proper voices of faculty governance. Both are at full strength – I am considering making an additional appointment to the SBC in the fall to increase the diversity of the committee but that can wait until September – it is best to make haste slowly.

Gwen Steigelman has organized the faculty leadership meeting in September. A rough agenda for the October Senate meeting is posted on the web. In mid September, I shall write to the UO Senators to solicit their input and to request their views on additional agenda items or possible motions or other thoughts that they may have (these may have to be postponed as the October Senate meeting, although not fully booked, does not have endless extra space). Thus it is my belief that matters of faculty governance are well in hand for the summer months. And the everyday running of the University may safely be left to the Administration where it properly belongs. In particular, with the exception of his duties as chair of the Committee on Committees and his role as a member of the Faculty Advisory Committee, I see no need for any action of any kind in an official role on the part of the Vice President of the Senate. This is not, of course, to deny the Vice President and or any member of the Senate to exercise leadership, give advice, etc as long as they do not improperly imply Senate endorsement of these activities.

Let me turn finally to my own activities. As we have discussed earlier, I am a scholar. The fundamental purpose of the University is not bureaucracy. It is the creation and transmission of knowledge. I did not expect to assume the role of Senate Vice President in June 2008 – I did not actively seek out this office. I have family and professional commitments of long standing for summer 2009 which were made in advance of the May 2008 election which I must honor. I shall be in Madrid, A Coruna, Berlin etc on professional business and shall also take a bit of holiday this summer. I anticipate the forthcoming academic year to be a busy one for me and I simply must spend substantial amounts of time this summer on my own research – I have many writing projects that are very behind schedule. Thus I am departing Eugene tomorrow (Monday 22 June 2009) and returning Sunday 13 September 2009. There can surely be no objection to my absence as I do not receive a salary from the University during this period. As indicated above, the matters of faculty governance are in good hands with the usual committee structure SBC, FAC, COC, etc.

Still, emergencies do arise. I have left full details of my summer travel plans with your office, with Melinda Grier, and with Gwen Steigelman. These are personal documents and I should appreciate your honoring my privacy. But your office, Melinda, and Gwen can contact me in case of an emergency – but try not to have emergencies! And, of course, I shall have access to email on an occasional basis. But I really foresee no tasks which requiring action Senate President this summer. Let me reassure you that my duties on the PTRAC and as President of the IFS are similarly under control.

Summertime is a period when the faculty of our University can take what amounts to a voluntary unpaid furlough to do their research. I love working at the University of Oregon and intend to return refreshed and actively engaged with the Senate in the fall.

Respectfully submitted

Peter B Gilkey  
President (2009/10) University of Oregon Senate  
President (2009) InterInstitutional Faculty Senate  
Member Promotion, Retention, Appeal Committee