

A HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE

Representative governance at the University of Oklahoma began on April 13, 1942, when President Joseph A. Brandt called to order the first session of the University Senate. The meeting named a committee on committees that would thereafter choose the members of all standing and special committees of the senate.

It also appointed a faculty committee to consider the troublesome issue of closing university buildings after 10:30 p.m., heard and approved a report advocating greater research opportunities for all professors and a reduction of teaching duties for those engaged in research, agreed to some procedures for the future work of the organization, and adjourned.

The public and the press were excluded from the meeting, and the new body received a stern rebuke from the editor of the Oklahoma Daily. To those familiar with faculty governance at the University of Oklahoma today, this modest beginning will seem a trifle mundane; to members of the faculty of 1942, however, the entire business was very heady stuff.

For the previous quarter century, from 1916 to 1942, the university's policies—educational, administrative, and fiscal—had been determined entirely by the president and an entity called the Administrative Council, consisting of the president, the vice president, and the deans. Within the departments, "heads"—appointed by the deans without consultation and serving at their pleasure—almost single-handedly hired and fired faculty members, made policies, divided funds.

The institution recognized a body called "the general faculty," but that body rarely met and almost never considered any important administrative policy. By the late 1930s, a small but powerful group of veteran deans literally dominated every facet of internal institutional governance. This was the situation confronting President Brandt when he assumed his duties in August 1941.

Brandt had been at the university from 1928 to 1938 as an effective and popular director of the University Press; he understood clearly the extent to which an entrenched administrative aristocracy ran the university. At the very start of his administration, he took steps to break the power of both the deans and the departmental heads, and no step was more important than his determination to replace the Administrative Council with a democratically chosen University Senate composed of members of the faculty.

Brandt took up a proposal for such a body that had been developed by some faculty members in the fall of 1941 and recommended it to the Board of Regents at their meeting of January 1942. He did so, he told the board, because he believed it would "do much to create a more wholesome democratic

feeling on the part of the faculty and that they will have a larger part in determining policies of the university."

The board, led by its chair, Lloyd Noble of Ardmore, approved the idea. A senate composed of 43 faculty representatives, apportioned among the university's colleges, schools, and chosen by their colleagues, was henceforth to consider, debate and offer recommendations upon the largest and most important questions of university policy and governance.

By the terms of that original plan, the president of the university was to serve as an ex officio member of the senate and as chair of its meetings. President Brandt performed this function until the end of 1943, when he resigned the presidency. The new senate selected the search committee for his successor, the first search committee for an administrative position in the history of the University of Oklahoma.

That successor, George Lynn Cross (who had been one of those professors involved in working up the plan for the senate in 1941) chaired the body until 1952, when he recommended that the chair of the senate should be elected from the faculty. In March 1972, the name of the body was changed from University Senate to Faculty Senate, and two years later, the Health Sciences Center faculty, who had hitherto sent their representatives to the meetings in Norman, organized their own governing body.

Since 1942, hundreds of members of the faculty, chosen by their colleagues, have served in the senate. There is no significant policy of the University of Oklahoma that this body has not helped to shape, no concern of the faculty that this body has not brought forward for discussion and resolution.

From the defense of academic freedom to the establishment of a sounder curriculum, from defining the duties of faculty members and the methods of evaluating their performance to establishing and structuring the committee and council system of the institution, from considering long-range planning to debating short-range financial exigencies, the Faculty Senate has gone about its work. It has spoken the view of the faculty on salaries and fringe benefits, on the proper punishment of academic misconduct, on the penalties for sexual harassment, on the role of athletics at the university, on the need for effective affirmative action policies.

The Faculty Senate has lobbied the Oklahoma Legislature and refined the procedures for awarding tenure, adjudicating grievances, and searching for new members of the faculty and the administration. It has tried to democratize the departments by marking out the responsibilities of the "A" committees, and it has managed the faculty's relationships with the staff, the administration and the student government.

No one will claim, of course, that the Faculty Senate has always had its way. Over the last 50 years, there have been many moments of spirited disagreement between the senate and the administration or between the senate and the university regents – and many times when the senate's advice was rejected or ignored. No doubt, many members of the faculty from time to time have felt ignored and powerless.

But in the vast majority of instances the views of the faculty, as presented by the Faculty Senate, have been taken seriously and have established or modified the official policies of the university. It is pleasant to think that the original 43 members of the senate would have felt some satisfaction about the work of the body whose history they inaugurated on that April afternoon in 1942.

Message From the President

I am pleased to salute the Faculty Senate on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. Throughout their history, universities have survived and excelled because of the constructive and thoughtful participation of faculty members in their governance. For half a century, the University of Oklahoma Faculty Senate has encouraged and facilitated the faculty role in governance.

Without the senate's half century of labor, the university would be different and no doubt less successful. I enjoy and value my interactions with the Faculty Senate and its leadership, and I look forward to continuing a cooperative and productive relationship in the years ahead.

Richard L. Van Horn
President

1991-92 Executive Committee

Jay Smith, Chair (Educational Psychology)
Susan Vehik, Chair-Elect (Anthropology)
Robert Swisher, Secretary (Library and Information Studies)
Penny Hopkins (Zoology)
Claren Kidd (University Libraries)
Craig St. John (Sociology)
Terry Robertson, Faculty Compensation Committee Chair (Finance)
Trent Gabert, Faculty Welfare Committee Chair (HPER)

Chairs of the Faculty Senate, 1942-1992

1942-1944: Joseph A. Brandt (University President)
1944-1952: George Lynn Cross (University President)
1952-1953: Olin L. Browder, Jr. (Law)
1953-1954: Joseph C. Pray (Political Science)
1954-1955: Rufus G. Hall (Political Science)
1955-1957: Jim E. Reese (Economics)
1957-1959: Rufus G. Hall (Political Science)
1959-1960: John C. Brixey (Mathematics)
1960-1961: Cortez A.M. Ewing (Political Science)
1961-1962: John G. Eriksen (Political Science)
1962-1963: Bruce I. Granger (English)
1963-1964: Joseph C. Pray (Political Science)
1964-1965: James G. Harlow (Education)
1965-1966: John G. Eriksen (Political Science)
1966-1967: William H. Maehl (History)
1967-1968: Gilbert C. Fite (History)
1968-1969: Sherril D. Christian (Chemistry)
1969-1970: Duane H. D. Roller (History of Science)
1970-1971: Cluff E. Hopla (Zoology)
1971-1972: Rufus G. Hall, Jr. (Political Science)
1972-1973: Geoffrey Marshall (English)
1973-1974: William H. Maehl (History)
1974-1975: Martin C. Jischke (AMNE)
1975-1976: Gail B. de Stwolinski (Music)
1976-1977: Alexander J. Kondonassis (Economics)
1977-1978: Donald C. Cox (Microbiology)
1978-1979: Bernard R. McDonald (Mathematics)
1979-1980: Barbara B. Lewis (Law)
1980-1981: Gregory D. Kunesh (Drama)
1981-1982: Gary L. Thompson (Geography)
1982-1983: Teree E. Foster (Law)
1983-1984: Robert A. Ford (Finance)
1984-1985: Tom J. Love (AMNE)
1985-1986: David W. Levy (History)
1986-1987: Penny M. Hopkins (Zoology)
1987-1988: Larry W. Canter (CEES)
1988-1989: Gary B. Cohen (History)
1989-1990: Andy R. Magid (Mathematics)
1990-1991: Roger Rideout (Music)
1991-1992: Jay C. Smith (Educational Psychology)