

Guidelines for Addressing Major Issues
that may lead to significant organizational changes such as the closure of a school or college or the merger to two or more schools or colleges.

**Adopted by the Syracuse University Senate Committee on Academic Affairs,
September 19, 2003**

The Senate Academic Affairs draws its charge from the University Senate Bylaws, which state the following: “There shall be a Committee on Academic Affairs which shall concern itself with the academic planning process of the University and with the consideration of academic priorities and organization. It shall advise and consult regularly with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on all matters that it deems appropriate.”

Accordingly, the Academic Affairs Committee, in exercising its mandated oversight, provides the following set of guidelines for the consideration of potentially significant organizational and programmatic changes. These guidelines complement the procedures adopted by the University Board of Trustees on January 12, 1995, “Academic Program Changes and the Board of Trustees.” They are based on the recognition that discussions about academic changes often begin under circumstances in which the outcome is not at all clear or pre-determined. Further, they state the Academic Affairs Committee’s general expectations for the consideration of such major issues and provide internal procedural guidance for the committee.

Internal Consideration

When confronted with potentially significant threats or opportunities, schools or colleges should undertake serious self-study and planning, while simultaneously engaged in candid substantive dialog with the central administration and other interested parties. The self-study and planning process should address questions put to it by the administration as well as those that arise from its own consideration. The process would normally address the administration’s expectation of the unit and the unit’s specific goals and the resources and options available to achieve those goals. An external review, evaluation, or consultation is generally helpful and would normally occur.

Consultation with the Academic Affairs Committee

After the previously described internal consideration has occurred, and when the central administration is considering the initiation of major structural changes or has under consideration several options for intervention, preliminary consultation with the Senate

Academic Affairs Committee should occur. This consultation will provide an opportunity for collegial consideration of the question and possibly advice on how to proceed. The goals of such consultation are to examine the academic issues of potential interest to the whole University, consideration of options for achieving the University's goals, and identification of problems as well as further opportunities that may arise.

Proposal for Action

When either the central administration after consultation with the academic unit in question or the academic unit itself has determined upon a course of action, it should present its proposal to the Senate Academic Affairs Committee, together with its rationale and the evidence in support of the proposed action, for the Committee's review and recommendation to the Senate.

Upon receiving such a proposal, the Committee will expect that the two procedures outlined above will have been completed.

An individual or a group of individuals who would be directly affected by the initial proposal may request that the Academic Affairs Committee review an alternative to the proposal presented by the central administration or the academic unit. The Committee may agree or decline to review the alternative proposal. If the Committee declines to review the proposal, it will communicate the reasons to the individual(s) who made the proposal.

Having received a proposal for action, the Committee will review it in the manner it deems appropriate. Among its considerations will be that

- the proposal for action is based on a clear academic rationale that is grounded in the institutional plan, priorities, mission or vision;
- the proposal for action clearly addresses student, staff, and faculty needs and concerns;
- all phases of the process allow effective and timely communications with all stakeholders in the unit(s) and other concerned school and colleges.

In making its recommendation to the Senate, the Committee will work with the Senate Agenda Committee to assure that the following standards are met:

- there is sufficient time for open discussion, reaction from the units(s) in question, and possibly consultation with stakeholders or others;
- the time for discussion and reaction is relatively brief in order that the period of uncertainty may not be protracted;
- the University Senate takes action on the proposal in a timely manner.

The University Senate will take such action as it sees fit on the Committee's recommendation and communicate its actions to the Chancellor.