

The Faculty Senate

Prior to 1970, the Faculty met regularly as a whole in large auditoriums on campus. The meetings were chaired by the President of the University. The formation of a Faculty Senate to assume most functions previously carried out by the General Faculty was widely favored, and in 1970 the Faculty adopted, almost unanimously, the plan for a Faculty Senate proposed by the Faculty Advisory Committee, chaired by John Herr. The General Faculty would thereafter meet as a whole only at the opening and at the end of the academic year, i.e., September and May. The opening meeting of the Senate took place in Currell College with the late Glenn Abernathy (Political Science) (1970-71) as its first chair. The initial item of business was to appoint a committee to propose by-laws. Originally, the president had a one-year term. Chairs in the years following Abernathy were the late Olin Pugh (Business) (1971-72), the late Bill Wesson (Business) (1972-73), the late Elmer Schwartz (Engineering) (1973-74), and John Herr (Biology) (1974-75).

For better transition, continuity, and status, John Herr persuaded the Faculty to adopt a two-year term for the chairs. This term was to be preceded by a year as chair-elect and followed by a year as past-chair. The first two-year term was filled by Steve Ackerman (Foreign Languages) (1975-77). Robert Felix (Law) (1977-79) was chair-elect during Ackerman's second year, to succeed him in the next year, with Ackerman to serve as past-chair. There followed in this scheme a number of long-time colleagues with experience in faculty governance: the late Charles Coolidge (History) (1979-81), Robert Patterson (History) (1981-83), the late Charles Weasmer (Political Science) (1983-85), David Rembert (Biology) (1985-87), the late Rufus Fellers (Engineering) (1987-89), Gunther Holst (Foreign Languages) (1989-91), and Peter Becker (History) (1991-93). All had been "present at the creation" of the Faculty Senate and understood its antecedents in faculty governance.

Subsequent chairs of the Faculty Senate form a later generation of faculty, informed by their older colleagues, and assuming leading roles within the current system of faculty governance: Marcia Welsh (Medicine) (1993-95), Henry Price (Journalism) (1995-97), Eldon Wedlock (Law) (1997-99), Caroline Strobel (Business) (1999-2001), Rob Wilcox (Law) (2001-03), Jim Augustine (Medicine) (2003-05), Gene Reeder (Pharmacy) (2005-07), Robert Best (Medicine) (2007-09), and Patrick Nolan (Sociology) (2009-11). The current chair is Sandra Kelly (Psychology).

Robert Felix
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