September 24, 2012

MEMORANDUM

To: ISU Faculty
From: Barbara Adamcik, Interim Provost/V.P. for Academic Affairs
Subject: Faculty Senate election criteria

It has come to our attention that some faculty are concerned that we have modified the original definition approved by the SBOE of faculty ineligible to serve on the first term of the new faculty senate.

At the April 18-19 SBOE meeting the Board approved a motion to “direct President Vailas to authorize elections of the Faculty Senate using the parameters listed in attachment 1 [included under PPGA Tab 9, page 3].” The third bullet in attachment 1 indicated that “Faculty members who have served a full three-year Senate term within the past five years and a term on the provisional Faculty Senate this past year (i.e., two terms in five years), will not be eligible to serve on the new Faculty Senate for the first term (Fall 2012 through Spring 2015).” For a number of reasons that will be articulated below, we have simplified this definition of who will be ineligible to serve on the Senate this first term to be anyone who has served on the Senate for any three of the past five academic years (AY2007-AY2012).

The objective in making a category of faculty member—those who have served on the former Faculty Senate—ineligible to serve the first term of the new Faculty Senate is to provide the opportunity for new voices and perspectives to be heard from the faculty. That objective is accomplished in the most fair and equitable manner by making the criterion for ineligibility simple and straightforward.

In trying to determine who the ineligible faculty members are using the original criteria submitted to the SBOE, we found the task to be more complicated than anticipated for many reasons. The faculty senators elected to serve a 3-year term for Fall 2009 – Spring 2012, had their term shortened with the suspension of the Faculty Senate by the Board in February 2011. Therefore, we considered service for those two years as a full term. In addition, it became apparent that some faculty members’ senate terms had been interrupted by a number of events—sabbaticals, assignment to administrative positions, resignations from Senate, for example. Sorting through and categorizing these different events in order to determine whether a particular type of interruption should or should not be included in the definition of a full term, made the process overly technical and cumbersome.

It also became apparent that it would be difficult to determine with certainty who the senators were for the previous years (AY2007-AY2012), and in several instances we could not with certainty determine all the faculty members who were serving as elected senators.

We created a table which we provided to the deans, to try to fill in the names of those who served as senators for each academic year. We attempted to determine who the senators were by looking at the meeting minutes for the first few and last few senate meetings for each semester. It became clear that
the number of faculty members identified as senators from the minutes varied from academic year to academic year, and in many instances a faculty member served only part of an academic year. Although the bylaws of the Faculty Senate in place for the past several years required that there be 30 senate seats apportioned among the colleges, Library, and two outreach campuses, plus the ex officio former chair, we found in AY2007 there were 32 people who we identified as senators from the minutes, for AY2008 it was 33, for AY2009 it was 34, and for AY2012 it was 33.

Thus, given the fact that the records in the Senate office are not complete, and there were two years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010) where a large number of the Senate minutes are missing (not posted on the Senate website), we had concerns with the validity of the data regarding who the senators were that we gleaned from the Senate minutes available on the website.

This is why we decided on a single, easily applied and understood criterion for determining ineligibility—those who have served on the former Faculty Senate three of the past five academic years. We believe this to be the most straightforward and fair way to meet the objective of having more diversity and new faculty representatives on the Faculty Senate, at least for this first term of service.

Furthermore, this approach does not silence or exclude a particular faculty voice/perspective. The senators who are elected to the new Faculty Senate—just like those senators who have been elected to previous faculty senates—are responsible for bringing forward the opinions and voicing the positions of the faculty they represent in their colleges/units. Excluding faculty members who have served recently for three or more years on the former Faculty Senate will not prevent faculty voices from being heard or represented.

I certainly want to encourage faculty who have not served on the senate previously, or who have not served recently, to consider running for a seat in your college/academic unit. I look forward to working with the new senate next month.