

# Provost Report to the Faculty

March 2013

## Aligning Decision Making with Responsibilities & Accountability

Since my arrival on campus in the fall, I have been paying close attention to how decision making occurs in Academic Affairs. Decision-making authority needs to be in alignment with responsibilities and coupled with communication and consultation. To be effective, there must be good working relationships and mutual trust and respect for the distinct roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in a decision.

Part of the process of aligning decision-making authority with responsibilities has involved defining what those responsibilities should be. This has not always been clear. Early last fall, as part of the effort to develop an administrative review process for academic deans, I defined a set of responsibilities that I expect deans to meet. Academic deans, along with department chairs, play a key administrative role in the functioning of Academic Affairs. Deans are the chief academic officers of their schools, responsible for providing leadership and management of academic issues, resource planning, policies and general operations in their schools. Unfortunately, these responsibilities have not always been reflected in the decision-making authority of deans. Over the course of this academic year, I have been devolving such authority, where missing, to deans to better mirror their responsibilities. For example, issues involving grade changes that were approved in the Office of the Provost have been turned over to deans. Likewise, deans will have greater discretion in deciding the fate of open lines within their schools. Although all open lines return to the Provost's Office for potential re-allocation, if it is determined that an open line will remain in a particular school, deans can decide to reallocate the open line to meet the school's changing needs and strategic priorities, after consulting with chairs and the provost. This aligns the responsibility of deans to manage and oversee resources within their schools with the authority to make a decision regarding the allocation of such resources. Of course, accountability comes alongside decision-making authority. An important aspect of accountability is communication and consultation with all interested parties, to ensure that relevant voices are heard. Ultimately however accountability requires ownership of a decision, which is why I feel it is important that all of us making decisions have clearly delineated responsibilities spelled out in a performance plan or in a review process, for which we can be assessed.

The effort to align decision making with responsibilities and accountability, however, goes beyond deans. My effort to introduce an additional step in the decision-making process in searches and hiring reflects this as well, and it is informed by the principles of shared governance as defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The decision making associated with the search process involves both faculty and administrators. All have a voice, but clearly the stage at which they have a voice, the mechanism through which that voice is expressed, and the relative weight of each voice will vary. Faculty have the primary role in searches because they have the responsibility to judge academic standards and qualifications in their disciplines and the primary decision-making authority over the curriculum. At different stages, however, the chair, dean, provost and the Executive Director of Compliance & Campus Climate all have primary decision-making responsibilities in the process, involving diversity, adherence to federal and state law and university policy, and budgetary considerations, for which they are accountable. The search process is a good example of how effective governance is predicated on shared governance.

As most of you are aware, this last fall I required both dean and provost approval of the candidates selected for on-campus interviews. Prior to that, the dean and provost were involved in decision-making only at the tail end of the search - i.e., approval of the final selection. In my view, there was a misalignment of responsibility and accountability with decision-making authority. If the dean and provost are responsible for diversity, ensuring adherence to rules, laws and policies, as well as budgetary considerations, a voice at the end of the search process did not provide an opportunity for effective decision-making in this area. I believe that this change, though minor, corrected for a significant misalignment that could have created serious problems.

### Faculty Annual Reports

Over the last few weeks I have heard many faculty raise concerns about the annual report, identifying issues related to both its complexity and purpose. Earlier this month I met with the Academic Affairs Committee to consider how we might improve the document. I certainly think we can look at streamlining the report and devising metrics that speak directly to some areas, such as teaching effectiveness. I am currently looking into a centralized faculty activity management system that would serve as a repository for faculty activities. Such a system would not only allow faculty to continuously update their information, hopefully saving time for all involved but also allowing aggregation of data to generate reports for accrediting bodies or internal analyses.

An annual report serves as an important record of the accomplishments of faculty members. The Office of the Provost maintains copies of all faculty reports as an official record of faculty activity. Beyond this record function, annual reports should inform key decision makers about accomplishments as well as problem areas that require support and professional development for faculty. Department chairs in particular should use the annual report as an opportunity to provide feedback to faculty and keep the deans and provost aware of the progress their faculty are making in their careers.

### International Programs

As you read this report I will be in Turkey, where I will join some of my counterparts from SUNY Global and from other SUNY campuses to review the status of the SUNY-YÖK Dual Diploma Program. As some of you know, New Paltz participates in a dual diploma program as part of an agreement SUNY has with the Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK). New Paltz is one of ten SUNY campuses that partner with seven Turkish universities. Our participation in this partnership, begun under the leadership of former New Paltz Provost David Lavalley, allows students to earn degrees in business, economics and liberal studies/TEFL by completing part of their education at New Paltz and the remaining part at the campus of one of our Turkish partners. When the program started in 2004 we had six students arrive from Istanbul Technical University (ITU). This spring we have 172 students on campus, primarily from ITU and Middle East Technical University (METU). Our Turkish students have a 94 percent graduation rate, and many go on to further their studies in the US, including some who remain to pursue MBAs or other degrees on our campus.

International programs such as the dual diploma program can enrich our campus community by exposing students to diverse viewpoints and cultures. That is not to say there are not difficulties. There can be significant adjustment issues as international students encounter a very different set of academic and social expectations from their prior experiences. Moreover, as the Turkish program has grown, we have had to make several adjustments to address concerns regarding housing, cost, class size, orientation and academic standards. As the current Memorandum of Understanding with our partners is set to expire, I am looking forward to discussing with my counterparts the ways by which we can make the program stronger and ensure its continued success.

We should be very proud of the strong record our Center for International Programs (CIP) has developed. The CIP has worked with faculty to advance program-development initiatives at SUNY Global in New York City, focused on the United Nations and on creating a new exchange program with Brazilian students in the School

of Business. These efforts speak to the strong international perspectives of our faculty. New Paltz students have an excellent record of winning national-level scholarships for study abroad, and New Paltz boasts the largest number of Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship winners within SUNY. In addition, our students have been very successful in the Fulbright US Student Program and the Freeman-ASIAN Scholarship. In 2011 the Diversity in Global Education Network awarded New Paltz the Diversity Network Innovation Award for our work in expanding study-abroad opportunities for diverse and underrepresented students. These and other efforts have rightfully made us a leader in international programming within the SUNY system.

Feel free to share your thoughts on these or other issues with me.

Sincerely,

Philip Mauceri  
Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs