

Rules Committee Report November 30, 2009

The Rules Committee met on Nov. 9 and Nov. 23, 2009. The Committee's principal charge for this semester is to re-examine the matter of term limits for faculty senators to determine whether any change needs to be proposed.

At the November 9th meeting, committee members shared the results of their informal survey of EKU's benchmarks and also of other Kentucky public universities. Nineteen benchmark schools and seven Kentucky schools were surveyed. Of this group of 26 institutions, it was found that at least 10 do have some type of term limit for their faculty senators. (It should be noted that it is not always easy to find faculty senate by-laws, etc. online, and there may be additional institutions with term limits who simply do not provide that information online.)

Among Kentucky schools, UK, KSU, and WKU have term limits, and U of L, Morehead, Murray, and NKU do not have limits. In other words, with the inclusion of EKU, in Kentucky 50% of the public university senates have term limits.

It was decided that an e-mail survey should be sent to all EKU faculty senators asking them to poll the faculty in their departments and to submit any results no later than Nov. 23rd. The survey asked which of the following options faculty preferred:

- A) Current term limits policy (2 terms of 3 years and rotating off for at least 1 year)
- B) No term limits
- C) Letting each dept. decide individually

At the November 23rd Rules Committee meeting results of the e-mail survey of EKU faculty were shared and discussed. These results are summarized below:

Faculty from 25 of 40 departments (or 63%) responded to the survey.

The departmental breakdown according to what a majority of faculty within each department favored was:

- Option A--13 departments (52%)
- Option B--2 departments (8%)
- Option C--8 departments (32%)
- 1 department tied for Option A or C (4%)
- 1 department tied for Option A or B (4%)

At least 182 faculty (approximately 34% of total full-time EKU faculty) responded to the survey. (Some senators did not give exact numbers but indicated their department favored a certain option.) The support for the various options by faculty as individuals (regardless of dept.) was as follows:

- Option A--87 faculty (48%)
- Option B--22 faculty (12%)
- Option C--69 faculty (38%)
- The other 4 faculty (2%) answered "B or C" or "A or C".

A number of faculty made comments which showed considerable thought and reflection upon the matter at hand. Arguments in favor of term limits included concern that more faculty get a chance to serve on the senate and that senior members not get too

entrenched (too much of an insider's club) and a belief that new ideas and approaches can come from changes in membership, etc.

Arguments against term limits included the fact that departmental needs differ and that is undemocratic to force senators to step down if their departments still want them to serve, that there is a steep learning curve for functioning well on the senate, that experience and institutional memory are valuable, that forcing people to serve on the senate (via changes mandated by term limits) if they are not really interested is not beneficial for them or their departments, etc.

Because the results of the survey did not suggest any clear course of action, the Rules Committee does not plan to propose any change at this time. They, however, will welcome any further input that faculty may wish to give them.

The Senate Rules Committee,
Nancy McKenney, Chair
Ann Chapman
Margaret Foote
Julie Hensley
Jane Rainey