Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Arts & Sciences Council

Thursday, February 8, 2018

Call to Order

Anita Layton (Chair) welcomed the committee, then asked for any changes or corrections to the January minutes. There being none, the minutes were then voted on as approved.

Veto Referendum

Mike Munger (Political Science) then discussed the veto referendum. He referenced the information below from a PowerPoint presentation:

History

First discussed in ECASC in 2013, after 2U vote.
Considered briefly in Council last AY
Brought up for consideration, announced, and sent out to entire faculty, with text of proposed change, on November 9, 2017
Presented, with history and explanations, on December 14 in Council
Presented, with discussion, on January 11 in Council
And, now, today. “It’s Thursday…”

Background (from web page)

- The A&S Council is a Representative Body. It is Elected by the Arts & Sciences faculty, the council serves as the faculty's primary institution for governance. The council's purpose is to represent the faculty and advise the Deans of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences.
- In its legislative Function, the ASC has power to make policy, within its jurisdiction. That Jurisdiction is described as follows:
  - Arts & Sciences priorities;
  - faculty development;
  - support and policy for faculty research, teaching, and administrative facilities;
  - department and unit organization within the Arts & Sciences faculty;
  - areas of interaction between graduate and undergraduate programs (e.g., teaching assistantships, budgets, and training)
  - other matters of concern to the Arts & Sciences faculty.
With particular respect to Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, the council determines and implements the broad objectives of undergraduate education and considers all matters affecting the academic and
residential environments of students, making recommendations and adopting regulations where appropriate.

**Choosing in Groups**

- Groups do not have preferences. Individuals have Preferences.
- Groups have decision rules.

**Let the majority have its way,**

**After the minority has had its say.**

- Any collective choice rule works equally well with Unanimous agreement. Even randomly selected dictatorship.
- Question is: How do we create Consensus Around an outcome when there is disagreement? That is, even those who disagree with that outcome will work to implement and support the result?
- Narrow majoritarianism is badly flawed as a decision rule, though it is often necessary for Expedience and Decisiveness.
- On narrow, routine “Business as usual” Majority Rule makes sense.
- But for larger questions, especially where the minority must be counted on for the success of the policy chosen, Need more “Legitimacy” than Simple MR affords

**Additionally….**

- The process by which votes are translated into outcomes, in a representative body or other aggregate decision rule, can be complex and even distorting.
- How do we choose Presidents? Not vote by majority, but Electoral College. Might wish we had some recourse, if that goes “wrong.”
- How do we choose “voters” for A&S Council? One department, one vote. Much like the U.S. Senate. No reason to expect Council actions to be representative of “the faculty.”
- That’s okay, for many purposes. But for many important issues, we need more faculty buy-in and voice than a “MWC” of departments.

**How to Ensure Consensus in the Face of Legitimate and Principled Disagreement?**

- Can’t be a product of hasty, poorly informed vote
- Can’t be a tiny majority
- Can’t be a product of rules that distort majority will

**NONETHELESS,** most of the time this is just not a problem.

**Rousseau’s Formula**

A difference of one vote destroys equality; a single opponent destroys unanimity; but between equality and unanimity, there are several grades of unequal division, at each of which this proportion may be fixed in accordance with the condition and needs of the body politic.

There are two general rules that may serve to regulate this relation. First, the more grave and important the questions discussed, the nearer should the opinion that. is to prevail approach unanimity. Secondly, the more the matter in hand calls for speed, the smaller the prescribed difference in the numbers of votes may be allowed to become: where an instant decision- has to be reached, a majority of one vote should be enough. (du C.S., 1973, Book II, chapter 2, p. 278).

**Two Different problems**
• Ensure that decisions of the Council “Represent” the “Will of the Faculty”. Problem is that Council is like the US Senate, with each unit having equal voting power regardless of the “Population” (number of faculty)
• Legitimacy for those who disagree, regardless of the proportion. Must feel that the process allowed for Dissent to be heard, and Registered

Proposed Solution to BOTH: A “veto Referendum”

**Veto Referendum**

Simpler, and Less Radical than a full Referendum Process. A Referendum allows the general electorate to change the status quo by passing “Legislation.”
A veto referendum is a bylaws provision
That **protects the status quo** from change that
(1) Is Controversial
(2) Is the product of arbitrary representation
(3) would likely not be implemented successfully anyway because large numbers of faculty (not number of departments, but number of faculty) oppose it.

**How it works….**

Suppose a legislative body enacts a new Policy. If enough citizens oppose the new law they have the option of calling a “veto referendum.” In Effect, this means the policy is too Divisive or Controversial for Votes By Representatives, and Direct Endorsement is required.
If Enough valid signatures Are collected and presented within the statutory timeframe, the text of the new Policy Is placed on a Referendum ballot.
If a majority vote To Reject the Policy, it is Vetoed.
If a majority vote to endorse the policy, or if the vote is too small to satisfy quorum requirements, the Policy is Enacted.

**Four Issues**

• Domain
• Trigger
• Quorum
• Outcome/Decision rule

**Eligibility to Vote in Council**

II. Composition of the Council and Procedures for Election to the Council
A. Membership: The Arts & Sciences Council shall consist of an elected Chair and representatives of Arts & Sciences departments and programs that have regular rank faculty with primary appointments in that department or program and that make substantial contributions to undergraduate education.
Each department or program shall have one elected member and one elected alternate, except for the three military departments which shall have one elected member and one elected alternate representing all of them. In addition, there shall be one elected representative and one elected alternate from each of the undergraduate majors housed outside Arts & Sciences departments and programs. Arts & Sciences Council representatives shall approve new representatives to the Council from eligible academic units by a two-thirds majority vote. For voting purposes, the Faculty of Arts & Sciences shall be composed of the regular rank faculty members as defined by Trinity College of Arts & Sciences and whose primary appointment is in a department or program of Arts & Sciences. Representatives from units outside Arts & Sciences shall vote on matters concerning general undergraduate education, but not those specific to Trinity College nor on faculty issues, as determined by ECASC. The Chair of the Arts & Sciences Council may hold a primary appointment in any Arts &
Proposed By-Law Change: Domain

III. K. Faculty Referenda
i. The Arts & Sciences Faculty can, by a vote of the members at large, veto motions passed by the Arts & Sciences Council. A veto referendum is triggered when a qualifying petition is received by ECASC within 10 academic business days of the vote on the original motion. A qualifying petition must contain valid signatures (actual or electronic) of at least 10% of the faculty eligible to vote. An announcement will be made that the referendum process has been triggered within 3 business days of the submission of a qualifying petition.
ii. The wording of the referendum shall take the following form:
   “Motion X (date passed by Council) should be nullified.”
   “[Motion X: Text of motion passed by Council]”
   A "yes" vote signifies that the voter believes that the challenged motion should be nullified.
   A "no" vote means that the voter approves the challenged motion and wants it implemented.
   A vote of “Abstain” counts toward the Quorum but is neither yes nor no.
iii. Faculty will be allowed 10 business days to vote. A valid quorum is 40% of the faculty eligible to vote. Eligibility will depend on the subject of the motion that triggered the referendum: if a representative of the Council voted (or would have been eligible to vote) on the motion, then the regular rank faculty from that unit are eligible to vote in the referendum, and count toward quorum requirements.
   Any total number of eligible votes less than 40% affirms the motion as passed, because there is no quorum.
   If a valid quorum was attained, then the votes will be tallied. A majority vote would nullify the original motion.

Proposed By-Law Change: Outcome

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   Any total number of eligible votes less than 40% affirms the motion as passed, because there is no quorum.
If a valid quorum was attained, then the votes will be tallied. A majority vote would nullify the original motion.

Discussion was mostly against the proposal. David Toole (Global Health) and Stefani Engelstein (German) both objected to the proposal since it would change the form of faculty governance away from a senatorial model and it also might result in weakening of faculty governance. Michael Hardt (Literature) was concerned about how the proposal would affect departments with smaller numbers of faculty. Edna Andrews (Slavics) questioned why the proposal came about. José María Rodríguez García (Romance Studies) clarified that the veto referendum did not arise from the recent situation regarding Blue Print. He was on ECASC when the original idea was talked about. He also pointed out that some large departments, such as Statistical Science, were also against Blue Print.

Micaela Janan (Classical Studies) raised a question about whether Council should be debating this since she recollected it had been voted down in a previous meeting. It was determined that Council voted down talking about Alex Rosenberg’s amendments, not about continuing discussion about the proposal in the future.

Randy Matory (Cultural Anthropology) proposed two amendments. One was to raise the quorum to 70 percent. Another was to have department chairs collect votes in meetings. Rodríguez García objected to the amendments, saying it was unfair to require a higher threshold of participation for the veto referendum than for regular business in Council. He also did not support using chairs as collectors of votes due to the possibility of faculty feeling coerced by their chairs. It is also against the spirit of a referendum.

Both of these were voted down.

Janan proposed an amendment to define what an academic business day means. Council voted to add a definition: “An academic business day is a weekday during the fall or spring semester in which classes meet.”

This will be voted on next meeting.

**Interdepartmental Majors**

Jeff Forbes (Computer Science and chair of Curriculum Committee) spoke about a proposal to change interdepartmental majors. He went through the material on the PowerPoint presentation below:

**Current curricular options**

- **Program I**
  - Standard major/minor certificate combinations
  - Major requirements determined by departments
  - Requirements evaluated and approved by A&S Curriculum Committee*
    - Trinity College General Education requirements apply
- **Program II**
  - Individualized student program
  - Curriculum proposed by the student, with the help of an advisor, and the assent of all departments included in the study plan
  - Requirements evaluated, approved, and monitored by the Program II committee
A&S General Education requirements do not specifically apply

• Interdepartmental Major (Option within Program I)
  – Student-initiated major combining portions of the curriculum from two existing majors
  – Major requirements determined by the student with the help of advisors in the two departments
  – Requirements evaluated and approved by the DUS in each department (Dean for Curriculum ensures that basic requirements are met)
  – A&S General Education requirements apply

Current Trinity Requirements for IDM

• An interdepartmental major must consist of a minimum of 14 courses
  – $\geq 10$ courses at the 200-level or above.
  – $\geq 4$ of 7 courses per department must be taught within the department.
  – All courses among those normally accepted for a major in the two departments.
• Advisor in each department (primary & secondary)
• An IDM must be declared prior to senior year
• DUS Approval
  – Agree to initial list of courses
  – Jointly approve subsequent changes
  – DUS in primary department certifies IDM completion

Concerns:
• Consistency
• Monitoring
• Existence of better options
• Allow for more curricular innovation from faculty

Curriculum committee proposal for IDM revision

Convert the Interdepartmental Major into a department-originated pilot major.
• Two departments could propose an IDM
  – Requirements would be publicly available
  – Any student could declare an existing IDM
  – Students, faculty, and administrators can monitor progress towards requirements through the advisement report.
• IDM would be term-limited
  – Students could declare major for five years
  – After pilot
    • Create a permanent interdisciplinary major, or
    • Sunset
• Students who want to propose a specific, individually designed major can utilize Program II

Bulletin update

The Directors of Undergraduate Studies in two Trinity College departments or programs that offer a major. The student will work with an advisor in each department to adopt an existing interdepartmental major or to design a new one. The major must be approved by the directors of undergraduate studies in both departments who may propose an interdepartmental major (IDM). The proposed IDM will define a course of study covering core features of each discipline, such as theory, methodology, and research
techniques. The criteria must include at least fourteen courses split evenly between the departments. At least four of the seven courses required by each department are to be taught within the department. All courses must be among those normally accepted for a major in the two departments. The directors of undergraduate studies in the two departments must agree to an initial list of courses that the student will take in the two departments and jointly approve any subsequent changes to that course of study. Students are required to take courses and elective options necessary for completing the IDM.

Departments proposing an interdepartmental major must present a descriptive title for the major and a rationale for how the program of study will help them realize their intellectual goals. IDM proposals should fit into the educational mission of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences and the University. IDM proposals should be submitted to the Dean for Curriculum and will be evaluated to ensure that the proposal (1) meets the requirements stated above and (2) does not substantially duplicate an existing major.

Trinity College will publish the requirements for approved IDMs to the website and provide similar support for monitoring completion of requirements as other established majors. The IDM will be time-limited to 5 years, after which time, the IDM will be sunset or can be proposed as a permanent new interdisciplinary major.

Several faculty brought up the point that IDM’s are not normally broad enough to be part of Program II. Others were concerned about losing the student-driven aspect and thus hindering student creativity. A point was made that students could still propose the IDM, but that they would end up with more flexibility since an IDM on the books would include a series of classes and electives. That way, if a class in a student’s plan is canceled, they have the option of taking something else without having to get approval from the two DUS’s. Lee Willard (Trinity) reminded everyone that the IDM had to have measurable outcomes, per accreditation requirements.

Curriculum Discussion

Due to lack of time, the curriculum discussion was postponed to next meeting.

Council Chair Election

Layton announced that her term is up as chair. The following timetable will be used to elect a new chair:

- February 23: Nomination accepted
- (Confirm willingness to serve)
- March 5-19: Vote by A&S faculty
- By end of March: New chair announced!

She will send an announcement to all Trinity faculty asking for nominations.