Dear Madam Chair:

On July 28, 2016, members of the ad hoc committee to study and make recommendations on the Council’s representative model met to discuss one remaining part of its charge: whether it recommends any changes to term length of members and officers of the organization.

The committee did not come to a consensus on this issue. Outlined below are a few of the thoughts expressed. Additionally, the members present focused on defining the problem that any changes seek to address as ensuring greater continuity between council members and leadership. To that end, we’re sending a list of ideas and tactics to aid in that area which do not require term-length changes for members or executives.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Per our conversation, Tim and I are prepared to share this update in 10 minutes or less with the Council on Aug. 9 at the monthly meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Brockwell, co-chair
Tim Meacham, co-chair
Patrick Benner
Andy Gurka
Leigh McCullar
Lisa Miles
Nancy Propst
Susie Reid
Cindy Stearns
Sonia Chop

TERM LENGTHS

No consensus emerged on term lengths. Many members felt the current lengths are sufficient and also the maximum limit of what we can expect staff to reasonably serve USAC, particularly since there is not a university expectation that we contribute and serve on committees in the manner that faculty are required.

A few do agree that having a third year would potentially lead to long-term benefits in allowing the leadership to engage more of the council members in operations. But those
benefits were viewed as, at best, theoretical and do not merit making a major change at this time to our bylaws. Emphasis should be placed on helping the existing organization to better engage and maximize current membership and allowing the leadership to delegate more of the work across members and committees.

HOW DO WE SOLVE CONTINUITY ISSUES IN MISSION AND OPERATIONS?
In some ways, we’ve taken a substantial step forward on this. Our current leadership has worked intentionally to onboard new members through an orientation designed to give a more practical overview of duties. The past Council also invited nominated staff to attend this spring’s monthly meetings to give a clearer sense of the organization. The energy from having a “gallery” of folks really added to the meetings in April and May in a positive way. Additionally, the new representative model provides for staggering terms in order to give the divisional representatives an opportunity for mentorship and burden sharing when communicating with their respective divisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTINUITY

1. Continue to promote strategically that meetings are open to all staff and try to include agenda summaries in SpiderBytes promos to help staff decide when they are most interested in attending. We learned this year through the representative changes that staff desire to be engaged prior to decisions.
2. Leadership should reach out to unit leaders to encourage adding a running agenda item for USAC updates at divisional or departmental meetings. (And also work with members and communications to ensure USAC messages are clearly articulated in advance of such meetings).
3. Further define duties and goals of each member, and develop a model goal for members to include in TalentWeb to document their work for USAC with their supervisor. (Perhaps work with HR and Audrey to help draft and encourage this.) This could require some “mythbusting” about what USAC is and what it does.
4. Clarify and promote both non-member engagement and past member engagement. Work to build robust committees who welcome non-members to serve.

For officer elections, the committee recommends the idea of a “leadership boot camp” to be held sometime in the fall with former members. This would be an opportunity to share about what serving in a leadership role entails and ensure a continuity of operations/sharing of institutional memory. This would also start the conversation earlier on developing future leaders who understand the role of USAC and the commitment to service.

The group also talked about how USAC serves as a vehicle for change, but this matter was not the focus of our conversations, which centered on continuity.