

Report of the University Structure and Governance Committee on Charge S-0903: Senate Committee Charge Response Limits

Charge: Consider whether the University Senate should establish a general, maximum time limit for committee responses to charges issued by the Executive Committee. Make recommendations on time limits, and how to deal with charges that are pending in committee beyond specific deadlines or overall time limits. Respond to the Senate Executive Committee by March 5, 2010.

Background: This charge was initiated by the University Structure and Governance Committee itself in response to concerns that when prior charges had been granted numerous extensions, the discussions and consultations in earlier periods had become stale, and neither those consulted nor Senate had clear recollections of the issues involved or the deliberations of the Committee by the time the Report came before Senate.

Considerations: It is desirable that Committees report on charges issued by the Senate Executive Committee within the same Senate year. Apart from the appropriateness of the prompt conduct of Senate business itself, this avoids the additional difficulties that arise when charges carried forward from one year to another need to be deliberated by Committees having different active membership in different years, and when reports are issued to an Executive Committee differently constituted from the one that issued the charge. It is also desirable for Committees to report back while discussions, deliberations and consultations are still fresh, and while issues are still salient in the minds of Senators. However, in practice it is not always possible to report back within the same Senate year. There would be insufficient time for effective deliberation of charges issued towards the end of the Senate year; in addition, the necessary consultation and deliberation processes for some charges may well simply take longer than such a deadline would allow.

Nevertheless, the Committee concluded that some general maximum time limit for committee responses to charges issued by the Executive Committee would be appropriate, understanding that this would impose a certain discipline on our processes, without being irrevocably inhibiting, since the Executive Committee would remain free to re-issue lapse charges at a suitable later date at its own discretion. Consequently, the Committee recommends that the general maximum time limit for all charges issued by the Executive Committee by the March Executive Committee meeting of the Senate year following the one in which the charge is issued. This should allow almost all charges, including those requiring to be presented to Senate twice, to be resolved within the year following the year of issue.

This general maximum time limit, of course, would mean that while extensions to the original specific deadlines set by the Executive Committee are still possible, they may not extend beyond March of the Senate year following the original date of issue.

The Committee also considered how to deal with charges that are pending in committee beyond specific deadlines or overall time limits. The purpose of introducing a general maximum time limit is to encourage the efficient resolution of Senate business, not to constrain effective deliberation. Considering the need to balance dispatch with proper and adequate consultation and discussion, the Committee concluded that extensions should continue to be allowed as at present, but subject to the new overall limit; that Committee chairs or co-chairs should have the responsibility of reporting to the Executive Committee at least one month in advance of any

specific deadline if there are any indications or fears that the deadline will not be met and the reasons for this, whether or not an extension is being sought; that any charges not reported back to the Executive Committee by the March meeting in the year following the year of issue should automatically lapse, with the Executive Committee having the right to issue a similar or modified version of the charge immediately or at a later date, as it concludes is most appropriate given the reasons for the deadline not being met; and that in this case, committee chairs or co-chairs should have the responsibility of informing those already consulted of any re-issued charge, and inviting further consultation as necessary.

Recommendation: The University Structure and Governance Committee recommends adoption of the following resolution by Senate:

Be it resolved that:

1. Neither original nor extended Executive Committee deadlines for Senate Committees to report on charges issued to them shall extend beyond the March Executive Committee meeting in the Senate year following the year of issue.
2. Senate Committee chairs or co-chairs shall be responsible for reporting to the Executive Committee at least one month prior to the deadline being reached for each charge any indications or fears that the deadline will not be met, together with the reasons for this, whether or not any extension is being sought.
3. Charges not reported back to the Executive Committee by the March meeting in the year following the year of issue shall automatically lapse; at its discretion the Executive Committee may issue a similar or modified version of the charge immediately or at a later date, as is most appropriate given the reasons for the deadline not being met.
4. Senate Committee chairs or co-chairs shall be responsible for informing those already consulted of any re-issued charge, and inviting further consultation as necessary.

University Structure and Governance Committee, 2009-2010

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