

Motion to Democratize the Selection of Department Head/Chair

The SRSU Policy: Administrative Structure notes the following:

“Department Chairs are appointed annually by the President of the University with a recommendation from the Executive Vice President and Provost and serve at will. Each Chair reports to the EVP & Provost through the respective Dean” and so on.

Demonstrably, faculty currently have no say in the selection of department heads/chairs. Despite the rejoinder offered in Administrative Structure, it appears that heads/chairs are appointed by deans without any faculty involvement. Not only is this unfair and undemocratic, but it eschews shared governance, an essential element of successful institutions. In terms of the selection of department heads/chairs, the American Association of University Professors offers the following:

“The chair or head of a department, who serves as the chief representative of the department within an institution, should be selected either by departmental election or by appointment following consultation with members of the department and of related departments; appointments should normally be in conformity with department members’ judgment. The chair or department head should not have tenure in office; tenure as a faculty member is a matter of separate right. The chair or head should serve for a stated term but without prejudice to reelection or to reappointment by procedures that involve appropriate faculty consultation. Board, administration, and faculty should all bear in mind that the department chair or head has a special obligation to build a department strong in scholarship and teaching capacity.”

Further, standard practice in terms of shared governance at successful institutions includes faculty involvement in department chair/head selection. Faculty must be allowed to participate in the selection process of department chairs/heads.

The following Policy on Department Chair Selection is proposed to be adopted into the Administrative Policy Manual and included or referenced in the Faculty Handbook:

- That the chair/head should be selected by department election
- That the chair/head should be in conformity with department members’ judgment
- That the chair/head should serve a stated term
- That the chair/head may be reelected or reappointed only by procedures that involve appropriate faculty consultation
- That election be by faculty alone and that administrators not be allowed to vote.