A Proposed Constitutional Amendment Redefining Quorum for the General Faculty Meeting

Proposed by the Council on University Programs and Policies

January 12th, 2004

The Proposal:

In Article III Section 1 of the Faculty Constitution replace the term “voting membership” with “tenure-line faculty” in the following sentence:

“Fifty percent of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum of a General Faculty Meeting for the conduct of business.”

The amended sentence will read:

“Fifty percent of the tenure-line faculty shall constitute a quorum of a General Faculty Meeting for the conduct of business.”

(Note: ALL individuals able to vote under the current system will continue to be able to vote under the proposed system)

Background:

Attendance at the general faculty meeting has been falling for several years. This became particularly apparent in the Fall semester of 2003 when several faculty meetings ended prematurely following a quorum call. The general faculty meeting is the only constitutional means by which faculty conduct their business. If attendance continues to fall short of a quorum the mechanisms of faculty governance will cease to operate.

CUPP has held extensive discussions on the quorum issue, and has identified two sets of problems. The first set of problems might be called structural. Structural problems result from relatively superficial aspects of the faculty and meeting structure, and are thus easily changed. Structural problems would include meeting time, meeting location, and the definition of a quorum. The present proposal attempts to address one of the structural problems.

The second set of problems might be called fundamental. Fundamental problems consist of the various reasons faculty have actively chosen to disengage from the faculty meeting and from the faculty governance process. It will take considerable time to study and remedy these fundamental problems, and CUPP will be initiating discussions along these lines. The present proposal does not address any of the fundamental problems.
Rationale for the Proposed Change:

Quorum is currently defined in terms of “Voting Membership” which is in turn defined as “All members of the academic affairs staff of Illinois Wesleyan University having full-time appointments of academic rank.” (Article III Section 2 of the Constitution) The voting membership includes several subgroups who do not regularly attend faculty meetings: Full-time visitors, athletic coaches, and tenure-line faculty on sabbatical leave. Full-time visitors are generally not required to attend faculty meetings, coaches are often conducting practices during the meeting, and faculty on sabbatical are often away from campus. As a result, the attendance required to meet a quorum is inflated by the inclusion of these groups in the equation. The proposed amendment corrects this structural problem by redefining quorum in terms of tenure-line faculty.

It is very important to note that the proposed amendment is not intended to disenfranchise any of these subgroups. The amendment only changes the definition of quorum. It does not change the definition of voting membership. All individuals able to vote under the present system will continue to be able to vote under the proposed system.