

12-5-2003

## Open Letter to the Provost

USM Faculty Senate

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**December 5, 2003**

**To: Provost Tim Hudson**

From: The Faculty Senate

Topic: The new university "Excellence Awards Selection Committee"

The purpose of this letter is to express dismay on the part of the Faculty Senate about your decision to create a new "Excellence Awards Selection Committee (EASC)" at the University level without any prior consultation with the executive committee of the Faculty Senate. When Dr. Myron Henry (president of the Faculty Senate) and Joe Olmi (Secretary of the Faculty Senate) met with President Thames, Provost Grimes, and you in the summer of 2003, it was agreed that a major goal was to stress open communication and eliminate "sudden surprises." This fall has been filled with sudden surprises for the faculty at large (e.g., the alcohol and drug policy and more appointments of senior administrators without searches).

One sudden surprise was the pronouncement from your office that the EASC had been created. There was no prior consultation with any officer of the Faculty Senate. In fact, Dr. Henry was informed about the creation of your committee (which is apparently intended to replace the long standing Faculty Senate Awards Committee) through a November 14 email from Associate Provost Cynthia Moore. That email read,

*We would like for each college to nominate one senior faculty member for the Excellence Awards Selection Committee. In addition, the Faculty Senate would also select one faculty member to serve on this important committee. Please send me your faculty names by Tuesday, November 18, 2003.*

Dr. Henry replied to Dr. Moore's email with a November 16 email which read,

*I am in receipt of your November 14 email in which you seem to be announcing a new "Excellence Awards Selection Committee" without any consultation with the Faculty Senate through its leadership. Permit me to remind you that the Faculty Senate, which consists of elected representatives of USM faculty, has for a long time had a standing Awards Committee. If you access the Faculty Senate Web page and then link to committees, you can go back as far as 1998-99 to note that the responsibilities of the Faculty Senate Awards Committee have included selecting*

*the HEADWAE recipient; the Excellence in Teaching and Service recipients; the Librarianship recipient, and the recipients for the Faculty Memorial Fund Scholarship.*

*For you to now create a new committee that apparently would assume these duties and for you to request nominations (from deans?) in the face of an existing Faculty Senate Committee that has well established responsibilities in this arena is disappointing (If this is your intent). And to do this without any consultation with the elected leadership of the Faculty Senate or without presenting a proposal for discussion to the Faculty Senate (which met on November 14) would seem quite contrary to the principles of participatory governance at our university.*

In this context, I formally ask that you defer indefinitely the implementation of your version of an Excellence Award Committee until such time as conversations with the Faculty Senate leadership and/or the Faculty Senate as a whole can occur which encompass a host of topics and implications related to the selection of faculty Excellence Awards. Of course, others could be involved in these conversations too.

Dr. Moore responded by emailing the following terse message to Dr. Henry:

*I have not received the name of the Faculty Senate member who can serve on the University Excellence Selection Committee. Can you send me this today?*

Dr. Henry then re-sent his November 16 email to Dr. Moore with further commentary. Subsequently, an effort was made to set up a meeting involving officers of the Faculty Senate and representatives of the provost's office. Specifically, Dr. Dave Beckett (president-elect of the Faculty Senate) and Dr. Olmi met with you on November 24. About a week later, Dr. Henry emailed the following message to you.

*Late yesterday afternoon, the executive committee of the Faculty Senate met in preparation for a special meeting of the Senate scheduled for Friday, December 5. Among other things, we discussed the issues surrounding the administration's decision to form a new university awards committee, and the implications this decision may have for the Faculty Senate Awards Committee. David Beckett, Joe Olmi, and I all shared a sense of what we thought we heard in our separate conversations with you (November 24 among you, David, and Joe; and yesterday between you and me.) All of those present noted that the Senate committee has had responsibility for a host of faculty awards for a rather long time.*

*All members present were troubled by the total lack of communication with any officer of the Senate on this matter. Nonetheless, it was decided that for this year, we would be agreeable to merging the membership of the committee formed by Dr. Cynthia Moore, and the Faculty Senate Awards Committee. That would mean the merged committee would have a total of ten members on it. We would then agree to engage in timely discussions in spring 2004 about possibilities for next year. What we propose would allow the temporary, expanded committee to continue working on the awards for the remainder of this academic year (the HEADWAE award recipient for this year was already determined by the Senate Awards Committee, and he is not a faculty senator.)*

As of our December 5 Faculty Senate meeting, Dr. Henry had received no response from you. The Faculty Senate as a whole now formally requests that you respond to Dr. Henry's suggestions in a timely way. We hope your response will demonstrate a commitment to participatory governance and open communication that has been lacking in this entire awards committee issue. Thank you.

xc President Shelby F. Thames

**Unanimously passed by the Faculty Senate at its December 5, 2003 special meeting.**