

Report from the Faculty Governance Committee
For the February 8, 2024 Faculty Meeting

τὸν θῆρα μὲν χέλυν, τὸ φωνοῦν δ' αὖ λύραν ὁ παῖς καλεῖ. — Sophocles, *Ichneutae* 312
“The child calls the creature a tortoise, and the thing that makes the sound a lyre.”

This verse comes from an ancient Greek satyr play that St. Olaf Classics students will be performing at the end of April. The god Hermes, though just born, is precocious enough to have invented a lyre by stretching a cow skin across the opening in a tortoise shell, adding a pair of animal horns, and attaching strings. That such an odd contraption is able to produce beautiful music seems miraculous to the chorus of satyrs. In the same way, it may seem miraculous to you that the odd assortment of topics being discussed by FGC right now could possibly produce music at all—let alone beautiful music. But if you will suspend your disbelief for a few minutes and read on, you may change your tune!

At the February Faculty Meeting, FGC will be proposing two resolutions, both of which involve tweaks in the language of the *Faculty Manual*. The tweaks, though small in size, are big in significance.

1. [FGC Resolution 23/24-05](#) – To Revise *Faculty Manual* 4.I.A and 4.II.A.2.e – Equal Employment Opportunity

This resolution comes from a working group (Associate Provost Jason Engbrecht, Kathryn Ananda-Owens, Meneviş Cilizoğlu) charged with considering possible revisions to the *Faculty Handbook*. In the course of their discussions, they realized that the *Faculty Manual* still contains three references to Affirmative Action. Since the College is no longer permitted by law to have an affirmative action policy, St. Olaf's General Counsel Carl Lehmann has recommended using “Equal Employment Opportunity” as the title of Section 4.I.A, changing “Compliance with federal affirmative action and equal opportunity guidelines” to “Compliance with equal employment opportunity guidelines” in Section 4.II.A.2.e, and replacing “Affirmative Action” with “Equal Employment Opportunity” in the Index.

2. [FGC Resolution 23/24-06](#) – To Clarify References to “Associate Dean” in the *Faculty Manual*
All references to “Associate Deans” in the Faculty Manual are intended to refer to Associate Deans of the Faculties, not to other administrative roles that may also carry the “Associate Dean” title, such as Associate Deans in Admissions or Student Life. At a dozen places in the text, the current language leaves this ambiguous. The proposed clarifications are recommended by FGC with Provost Sortor's support.

FGC already has five major topics on its agenda for the spring:

1. Academic Freedom: The large batches of thoughtful comments that were gathered from the table discussions at the Faculty Meeting on November 9, and from the conversations co-sponsored by CILA, FGC, and IFC on December 5 and 12, have led the Academic Freedom Subcommittee (Doug Casson, Hsiang-Lin Shih, and Matthew Wright) to revise its proposed Statement of Principles and its proposed changes to the *Faculty Manual*. We hope to finish discussing these revised proposals in time to bring resolutions to the Faculty Meeting on March 6. Many thanks to our deeply dedicated subcommittee!

2. Recommendations from the Tenure & Promotion Committee: This year's hard-working T&P Committee has sent FGC a prioritized list of recommendations regarding the review process. There may not be time to consider all of them this spring, but the Appointments & Promotions Subcommittee will begin with those that are most urgent, in particular the idea of moving the evaluation of promotion-only

dossiers from the fall (same time as the evaluation of tenure/promotion dossiers) to the spring, so as to make the ever-increasing workload for the T&P Committee more manageable.

3. Role of Faculty Meetings in Shared Governance: During the “committee of the whole” part of the Faculty Meeting on December 7 (a procedural move suggested by President Singer so that, with no minutes being taken and all actions being non-binding, faculty would feel free to speak freely), FGC collected responses to two questions: i. “Have you felt engaged and/or heard in college-wide faculty meetings at St. Olaf? Why or why not? Can you give us some examples?” ii. “What could increase your sense of individual/collective engagement in this environment?” We received written and online feedback from 22 tables/individuals, expressing a wide range of opinions. FGC is now digesting this input (which includes more than one compliment about the plated, environmentally friendly lunches!) and pondering how to proceed with its exploration of shared governance at St. Olaf. Still up in the air is the question of having a faculty member other than the President or Provost preside over Faculty Meetings.

4. Committee Service: FGC has begun discussing a proposal to dedicate contingent faculty seats on standing committees. Timing poses a challenge at this point since any changes to the *Faculty Manual* do not go into effect until the academic year after they are approved by the Board of Regents. Last May, for example, the faculty voted to switch from holding at-large elections in April, and Faculty-specific elections in May, to the reverse. But since the Regents had already met for their May meeting, they were not able to approve that resolution until they met again in October; this means that inverting the order of the two elections, though approved, cannot be implemented until 2024-25.

5. Last April the faculty voted to eliminate annual renewals in connection with long-term appointments (i.e., Teaching Specialists and Special Appointments), but there are still 30+ references to “renewal” left in the *Faculty Manual*, most significantly in Section 4.III.E.6: “Term appointments are for one, two, or three years; these appointments are renewable up to six years.” At the FGC meeting on November 29, Pete Gittins, Chair of the Nominations & Explorations Subcommittee, led the group in a wide-ranging conversation about the language in this section and its implications for the contracts of NTT faculty. FGC will continue to discuss whether substituting another word for “renewal” would improve the clarity.

Thanks to everyone on FGC and to all the rest of you who help us produce beautiful music from Hermes’ tortoise-shell lyre!

Sincerely,

Anne H. Groton, FGC Chair