

Dear President Choi:

The Missouri S&T Faculty Senate welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed changes to CRR 20.110 on department chairs. The department chair has a more direct effect on faculty than any other administrator on campus. Thus, it is vitally important for the faculty that decisions about the selection, evaluation, and retention of the chair involve significant input from the department faculty. The S&T faculty understand and agree with the stated motivation behind the changes in the proposed CRR, namely that competent, effective department chairs are essential for the efficient operation of the university's academic departments. We also support the CRR's language on shared governance, inclusion, and diversity. Nevertheless, we have significant concerns over the current wording of the proposed CRR, particularly the following:

1. The most significant concern is that, as worded, it places all authority over the chair search process and selection in the hands of the dean and does not mention explicitly a role for the department faculty. Nor does it contain any details about the role of the search committee. While a good dean would, of course, appoint a significant portion of department faculty to the chair search committee, there is great concern that a dean could easily abuse the rule as it is currently phrased and minimize the role of both the department faculty and the search committee in the selection of a new chair.
2. Thus, we would like to see more language that specifies the predominant role of the department faculty both on the search committee and in the approval of the finalists selected by the committee.
3. We also suggest that the dean should not be able to reject the search committee's proposed finalists except under extraordinary circumstances that are explained fully to the department faculty and agreed to by the majority of the department faculty.
4. The proposed changes hit Missouri S&T particularly hard because the proposed CRR singles out the section on chair searches in our campus bylaws for nullification. We believe that our bylaws have served us well and have appropriately preserved the rights and role of the department faculty in chair searches in a way that the proposed CRR does not.
5. We question whether a new CRR can actually "abolish" a section of our bylaws, as the draft indicates, since amendments to the bylaws must normally be approved by the campus's general faculty.
6. We also understand that department chairs have a dual role not only to manage their departments but also to represent the views of their departments' faculty to the dean and other administrators and to execute department policies. We suggest, therefore, including these important roles in the list of chair responsibilities.
7. We are concerned that the proposed CRR has no language about the department faculty's role in the evaluation of the chair and in decisions about the retention or reappointment of the chair.
8. We believe that these suggestions are supported by guidelines established by the AAUP Redbook of Policy Documents and Reports (esp. pp. 121 and 130-31), and by policies on chair searches at peer public land-grant universities.

The Faculty Senate of the Missouri University of Science and Technology

