**To:** Committee on Faculty Affairs

**From:**  Steering Committee

**Re:** SOSA

**Date:** March 2010

**Background:**

Recent discussions with the Committee on Faculty Affairs have alerted Steering to the fact that there is no single current document describing the purpose, principles and procedures guiding the SOSA program. There are approximations to such a document including the original proposal that created the SOSA program in 2000 which is described as “…a transitional, short-term model that will be implemented until long-term systematic changes are made with respect to faculty course load.” Additionally, the SOSA process was reviewed in 2005 and 2008 when major changes with respect to the types of available awards were made. The original proposal and the results of the 2008 review are available at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/research/index.html>. Instead of relying on a central defining document that reflected community input and approval through governance, the purposes and processes governing the SOSA program were outlined in a changing succession of RFPs.

**Charge:**

The Steering Committee charges the Committee on Faculty Affairs to develop a SOSA document that:

1. describes the enduring principles which define the purposes and mission of the SOSA program;
2. describes the principles guiding the various factors by which proposals are to be judged; and
3. describes the principles defining which types of projects are eligible to receive support.

Such a document should provide a basis from which future RFPs can be drafted each year. Also, the resulting SOSA document and its implementation will be the subject of future reviews.

Additionally, we note that CFA is currently charged with determining a process by which the SOSA committee reviews applications from its membership. A recommendation concerning this more narrow charge can be folded in to a preliminary recommendation meeting this broader charge. However, in case CFA cannot complete the broader charge in time for the next SOSA cycle, CFA is asked to complete its work on the more narrow charge in time for that cycle. Similarly, CFA might need to create the RFP for the next SOSA cycle before it has a chance to finish its work on this charge. In that case, CFA is asked to create the RFP in such a way that it does not represent a change of principles from recent RFPs.

In its deliberation, Steering asks CFA to consider the membership of SOSA. If CFA feels that changes in committee make-up are appropriate, CFA is asked to give such a suggestion to the Steering Committee which will consider it as input to the ongoing review of governance.

Lastly, we note that the testimony that CFA receives to create a preliminary recommendation should include any input from recent chairs and members of the SOSA committee. Of course, broad community input must inform the development of any final recommendation, and we note that a survey of faculty provided useful information at the time of the last SOSA review.

**Timeline:**

The Steering Committee requests that CFA complete this charge by the end of the fall semester, 2011

**TCNJ Governance Processes**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee receives an issue from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community through regular updates to the campus community and the Governance Web Page ([www.tcnj.edu/~steering](http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering) ). The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement. The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any actual solutions. Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the problem statement, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a recommendation. Committees typically receive input through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups. Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government Association, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony prior to developing a preliminary recommendation. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance Web Page.

**Step #3 -- Making a Final Recommendation:** Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation. Again, committees are expected to be proactive in receiving feedback on the preliminary recommendation. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send their final recommendation (complete documentation) to the Steering Committee.

**Testimony**

The presenting of testimony is central to the concept of shared governance. All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony. Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered. In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered. Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both step # 2 and #3 of the process. Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings. Committees should report in their minutes which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.