MEMORANDUM

TO: Leon Richards, Chancellor
FROM: Harry Davis, Faculty Senate Chair
RE: Membership in the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Council, VCAC
(Formerly the Dean’s Advisory Council, DAC)
DATE: November 2, 2009

The Faculty Senate met on October 9, 2009 and the following motion was unanimously passed.

Motion:

WHEREAS: Shared Governance on our campus is a shared value and a high priority among all constituent groups; and
WHEREAS: The spirit of cooperation on campus can only be facilitated by open meetings and full participation by all constituent groups; and
WHEREAS: the Faculty Senate has primary authority over fundamental academic matters; and
WHEREAS: Active participation by Staff Council and Student Government in decision-making functions is absolutely essential to an inclusive process;
THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT
Representatives of Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government should continue to be full members and regular participants in the Planning, Policy, and Assessment Council and the Vice-Chancellors’ Advisory Council.

The following is in response to your second memo of October 16th, 2009.

The Faculty Senate strongly believes that any discussion of academic concern is worthy of Faculty Senate input and participation. That the title of Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs includes “Academic Affairs” is indicative that the governance groups should attend the VCAC. We believe that many of the past (and future) VCAC agenda items involved the discussion of academic policy. We do not believe that the VCAC meetings are purely operational. In fact, the operation of departments is under the purview of academic policies and department chairs often seek interpretation of academic policies at the VCAC. Yes, the governance bodies are not responsible for carrying out policies – but they are responsible for ensuring that policies are carried out in accordance to such policies. They are also responsible for gaining insight from discussions about the daily operations that would drive changes in academic policies. The Senate was surprised that advice from the governance bodies would not be sought out by the VCAC and found this to be disturbing. As a matter of point, the opinion of the Faculty Senate Chairs was requested at least four times during the last meeting of the VCAC.
The Senate also finds it disturbing that members of the VCAC “may not feel comfortable” when discussing academic issues in the presence of the governance bodies. The Faculty Senate attends the VCAC meeting to provide the faculty perspective as well as to become aware of problems facing the College. There is no logical reason for someone to feel uncomfortable unless there is an unclear interpretation or implementation of an academic policy. The administration has other mechanisms to conduct business that may be sensitive to the governance bodies, these are called administrative staff meetings.

We find your October 16th memo to be disturbing in still another way. It seems that the definition of Shared Governance implied in this memo is different than the definition used by the Faculty Senate. Academic policy should not be written up by administration then sent to the Faculty Senate for approval. Academic policy should be conceived and developed in concert with all parties involved. It is a shared process and not a top-down process. This process would begin in meetings such as the VCAC. We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Aloha and Mahalo,

Harry Davis  Ibrahim Dik
Chair, Faculty Senate  Vice Chair, Faculty Senate