

Role of Department Representatives

Originally written:	November 1993
Approved:	April 29, 1997
Amended:	September 28, 1999
Amended:	September 30, 2003
Amended:	September 23, 2008
Amended:	February 11, 2020

The role of the Faculty Association's Department Representatives is established in Article 10 of the by-laws of the Association.

"The members of the Association in each department (or, in the case of non-departmentalized Faculties, each Faculty) shall annually elect one member of the Department as Department Representative. The Department Representative is responsible for maintaining liaison between the Board of Directors and the Department, and for advising the Board of Directors on behalf of the members of the Department. In the case of units composed of non-teaching Board appointees, representatives shall be elected from units administratively similar to Departments and Faculties, as those members shall decide."

The functional role of the Department Representatives is an evolving one. As the Association has grown and its internal structure changed, the Department Representatives have become increasingly important.

The Board needs to inform its members and receive feedback from them on a variety of issues and uses meetings with Department Representatives as one way to achieve that.

On a regular basis, during the academic term, the Departmental Representatives typically meet with the President and/or other Officers for a briefing on Association initiatives and important areas of activity. Department Representative meetings are considered closed meetings with only Department Representatives, their alternates, Board of Directors members and Association staff invited to attend. At the President's discretion, guests (such as members of the bargaining team, or members of other Faculty Association committees) may be invited to attend the meetings.

The Association asks the Department Representatives to keep the academic staff members in their units informed about the activities and issues raised by the Faculty Association, and provides Department Representatives with summaries of the items addressed during the meetings (plus urgent items that come up between meetings) to share with their units.

The Association may also ask Department Representatives to consult with academic staff members on matters of interest in order to receive their input.

Input from the Department Representatives is particularly important during salary and benefit negotiations.

Board Governance

Department Representatives are also encouraged to consult with their members to identify any concerns they have that the Faculty Association may be able to address. These may be raised during a Department Representative meeting, or before the meeting if the item is likely to be extensive. In the case of concerns specific to the unit, the Department Representative may wish to meet with the Faculty Association (accompanied by other members of the unit if desired) separately.

Involvement of individual members of the Association as Department Representatives is seen as a way to encourage future involvement of those individuals as either members of the Board, as committee members, or as Association Representatives to faculty promotions and/or tenure committees.

Department Representatives are often approached by members of their departments or units with questions or problems in relation to academic staff matters and asked for advice. Since answers to many such questions and problems have complexities, ramifications, and implications legal and otherwise of which the Department Representative may not be aware, the Department Representative should always refer such questions, problems and requests for advice to the Faculty Association office.

For similar reasons, if a Department Representative is approached by a colleague for advice and assistance on FMC/FTPC matters, they should refer the colleague to the Faculty Association office.