As Chair of Faculty Council, I thank you for agreeing to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Governance. I believe this committee has an important mission and that your work will contribute to the effective work of faculty across the campus.

In 1966, the American Association of University Professors issued a “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,” which was jointly written with the American Council on Education (the leading organization representing American university administrators) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. This document—which records the shared wisdom of university faculty, administration, and trustees—notes that “[t]he variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort.”

The 1966 Statement goes on to identify various areas (such as budgeting and the hiring of administrators) for which joint effort is particularly important. It further identifies areas over which the faculty must exercise primary responsibility (such as “curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process”) if the university is to maintain its character.

The issues identified in the Statement (which is available online here: https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities) are at least as important today as they were 50 years ago. While this document is by no means binding on the committee, it serves to illustrate the vital role that faculty governance plays in a healthy university and to identify some areas of perennial concern. In addition, the University’s Collected Rules and Regulations (CRRs) identify several areas in which faculty governance (sometimes described as “faculty authority”) is particularly important. See, e.g., CRR 300.010.C.3.

The committee will examine what MU has been doing well recently in the realm of faculty governance, what has gone less well, and how we can improve. In keeping with the need for joint effort and the maxim that many hands make light work, suggestions for improvement will be offered to administrators as well as to faculty.

The membership and charge of the committee are set forth on the following pages.
MEMBERSHIP

The committee includes:

Anna Ball (Provost’s Office)
Baolin Deng (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
Mike Devaney (Electrical & Computer Engineering, Emeritus)
Wilson Freyermuth (Law), Chair
Chris Hardin (Nutrition & Exercise Physiology)
Bill Lamberson (Animal Sciences)
Erica Lembke (Special Education)
Nicole Monnier (German/Russian, NTT)
Jeff Rouder (Psychological Sciences)
Todd Ruppar (Nursing)
Marcia Shannon (Animal Sciences, Extension)

CHARGE

I hereby charge the committee as follows for the 2016-2017 year:

Fall 2016

During the fall semester, the committee will develop a series of recommendations concerning best practices for deans and department chairs in relation to faculty governance. In short, the recommendations will focus on how deans and department chairs can maximize the effectiveness of faculty governance within their units. The ultimate result will be a written report (in the form of a “white paper”) that can be shared with faculty, deans, department chairs, and other interested parties.

Keeping in mind that (1) many decisions of deans and department chairs are theirs to make as they see fit and (2) many such decisions are nonetheless best made after consultation with faculty, the committee will examine current practices (at MU and elsewhere) related to administrative decisions such as the appointment of subordinate administrators (e.g., associate deans, assistant deans, associate department chairs, directors of graduate studies, director of undergraduate studies), the development of budgets for schools/colleges and departments, the creation of new programs, and the distribution of raises (such as may exist from time to time). In particular, the committee will consider how faculty are able to participate in such decisions, including when that participation is largely or solely advisory.
The committee will also consider the role of faculty policy committees (which have different names in various units—e.g., “Faculty Affairs Council”—the term refers to mini versions of the MU Faculty Council) in representing the faculty of a unit. Issues to consider include how often administrators (especially deans) ought to meet with such groups.

Further, the committee will also consider how often deans and department chairs should conduct faculty meetings for their units. The appropriate role of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty at such meetings should be addressed. (Indeed, the appropriate role of NTT faculty may well be a useful matter to consider with respect to many of the items identified in this charge.)

The committee will address other related items as it deems them worthy of attention.

The committee will submit its written report to Faculty Council by January 17, 2017 (the first day of classes in Spring 2017).

Spring 2017

In the spring semester, the committee will turn its attention to how the faculty itself can improve its contributions to shared governance of the University. As in the fall, the ultimate result will be a written report (in the form of a “white paper”) that can be shared widely.

Drawing on the lessons of its work during the fall term, the committee will examine how faculty policy committees at schools and colleges can function more effectively, including by suggesting how often such groups should meet, how members should be chosen, and similar items.

The committee will also consider how the MU Faculty Council could communicate more effectively with faculty campuswide, offering advice about the frequency and mode of communication. Other advice about how Council could improve would be most welcome.

Other items to consider include: whether general faculty meetings are being used most effectively, what sort of faculty business is best considered by the general faculty as opposed to by Faculty Council or some other faculty body, and when it is appropriate for faculty participation in University decision making to be more or less formal (e.g., when should there be a recorded vote of some kind, what discussions are best held in public meetings, when are informal conversations more useful, etc.). It would be especially helpful for the committee to consider how the faculty can best exercise what the CRRs refer to as “advisory authority.”

The committee will address additional related items as it deems them worthy of attention.

In all of its work, the committee is encouraged to learn from the best practices of peer institutions.

The committee will submit its written report to Faculty Council by May 15, 2017 (in time for consideration at Council’s summer meetings).