

# Webster University Policy Handbook

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\* = Links to existing Webster University sites.

\*\* = In progress.

This handbook covers the policies, procedures, and governance organization, for Webster University. In addition to this Handbook, the University maintains various handbooks (i.e. staff, students) that define and organize operations of these University constituents.

## Webster University: Who We Are

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Webster University is an independent, non-denominational, international university with undergraduate and graduate programs in various disciplines including the liberal arts, the fine and performing arts, teacher education, business and management, communications and nursing. Our main campus and largest program is in Webster Groves (St. Louis County) which serves as a cultural center for the St. Louis metropolitan area, sponsoring and hosting programs open to the wider community. We serve adult learners elsewhere in the United States with professionally oriented programs at two other St. Louis sites, at 21 metropolitan campuses in sixteen U. S. cities, and on thirty U. S. military bases.

Webster University has an international vision and mission and has campuses in Geneva, Vienna, Leiden, London and Bermuda with undergraduate and graduate degree programs serving both local and international constituencies. We are currently pursuing the establishment of additional campuses in Asia, Latin America and Africa. We are committed to fostering international student and faculty exchange and to developing an international and multi-cultural perspective throughout the curriculum. As a university we are sensitive to changes and developments in the political, social, economic, scientific and artistic environments and endeavor to translate these changes into new educational services both in curriculum and in location.

Webster University is committed to serving adult learners as well as full-time, college-age undergraduates. We believe that courses should be scheduled at times and places convenient to adult students and that the curriculum should be responsive to their prior learning. Classes are small to encourage maximum student involvement in learning, and to assure that each student is treated as an individual. We believe that learning is enhanced by providing internships and other experiential learning opportunities for students and by augmenting the full-time faculty with experienced professional practitioners as adjunct faculty.

Webster University is committed to the utilization of instructional technology to enhance learning and to provide students alternatives to

physically present classroom activities. In our quest to be the best, our faculty are attuned to the most beneficial uses of technology.

Webster University is committed to keeping education affordable and accessible and to making continuous improvements in quality. We believe in the professional growth of faculty and staff, and invest in a professional development leave program and other activities to foster professional growth and a climate of learning for all members of the University community.

Webster University maintains contact with its diverse and widely scattered alumni who span the eras of the University's evolution from a single-campus Catholic college for undergraduate women through its secularization, its move to coeducation and graduate studies, its growing outreach to other locations and its increasing internationalism.

Having changed profoundly over the past quarter century, Webster University has developed a culture in which evolutionary change is accepted and expected. The university we are becoming will be:

- focused on student learning and quality educational outcomes
- international in scope and outlook, and fully integrated in operation
- committed to the practical uses of instruction technology
- responsive to societal changes
- involved in the solution of social problems
- permeable to society, not aloof from it
- accessible and affordable
- administratively lean and unbureaucratic
- willing to bring education to people at places and times convenient to them
- attentive to the need for recurrent formal periods of advanced education throughout the careers of most professionals
- engaged in continuous quality improvement

This policy handbook is a compilation of the current procedures for our self governance as a community of learners and is subject to periodic review and amendment as the University grows and evolves and as needs change.

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## Faculty Governance History

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The faculty have shared the responsibility for Webster University's directions. The commitment of the faculty to the institution as a

whole has carried into the governance system, which has historically been marked by open communication and a strong committee structure. All full time faculty are expected to contribute as part of their university service obligation, and they rise to that expectation admirably. Whether within their departments and schools or within the institution at large, the faculty are active in planning and decision-making.

The management structure of Webster University is based on partnership. Webster, unlike most other universities, operates under an ethos that assumes a sharing of responsibility for raising issues, determining the appropriate course to take, and administering those decisions. Webster administrators and faculty meet on task oriented, issue specific occasions with regularity. Webster faculty, particularly full -time, but also some part-time, assume significant administrative work loads. As well, many of the past and current full-time administrators have moved into those jobs directly from faculty ranks.

This intertwined assumption of responsibility has been one of the primary factors enabling the institution to be entrepreneurial, to take chances with general constituent buy-in and to respond quickly to challenges. In this constantly stimulating, collegial environment, everyone works, and works together. Even on issues such as salary, there has been a regular sharing of information and true negotiation, not confrontation. The joint understanding of Webster's mission and nature led to a mutual genesis of the University's alternative to tenure, the Faculty Development Leave.

Involvement in decision-making processes continues to grow. The initiatives in academic restructuring are a major example. Communication with the Administration in general continues to develop. Regular meetings between the FEC / Senate and the Administrative Council, plus regular meetings between the FEC Chair/Senate President and administrators have been markedly enhanced in their effectiveness since the FEC Chair / Senate President was invited to become a member of the President's Administrative Council in the Fall of 1994.

The Faculty Constituent Assembly also voted in 1994 to invite the President and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs to become non-voting members of the FCA.

Interaction with the Board of Trustees also continues to develop. The FEC Chair / Senate President has met with the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board since 1992, and as a member of the Administrative Council, the FEC Chair / Senate President has been present at and made a report to the regular meetings of the Board of Trustees since 1994.

Within the faculty governance system, there is an assumption of participation. The faculty governance system is representative, responsive and dynamic, as the following selected list of activities and decisions from recent years demonstrates:

- Formation of Multicultural Studies Committee, 1989
- Representation in Search Committee for the President of the University, 1990
- Change in procedures for Committee to Review Faculty, 1990
- Freshman Seminars, 1991 (revised 1995)
- Formation of Committee on Adjunct Faculty, 1992
- General Education Goals, 1992 (amended 1993)
- Gender Inequities in salaries, 1993
- Institutional Sexual Offense Policy, 1993
- Faculty Emeritus policy, 1993
- Plus and minus undergraduate grading system, 1993
- Restructuring of Graduate Council, 1993
- Institutional Analysis Committee, 1993
- Guidelines for student reporters wishing to attend FCA meetings, 1994
- European Faculty Governance, 1994
- Curriculum Committee Task Force, 1994
- Institutional Review Committee to replace Committee to review Administrators, 1994
- 9+2 Salary Contract Proposal, 1994
- Restructure of General Studies Committee membership, 1995
- Multi-Cultural Studies Committee membership expansion, 1995
- Committee to Review Faculty Task Force, 1995
- Formation of Institutional Accessibility Committee, 1995
- Endorsement of University Assessment Plan, 1995
- Revision Freshman Studies Program, 1995
- Multicultural Studies Committee Proposals to increase the numbers of under-represented people of color on the faculty, 1996
- Undergraduate residency requirement, 1996
- Electronic Communication Technologies Acceptable Use Policy, 1996
- Restructure of Committees due to academic and governance structure changes, including Graduate Council,
- International Studies, Curriculum, 1997
- Institutionalizing Assessment Committee (in progress)
- Revision in Faculty Grievance Procedures (in progress with consultation of Webster AAUP Chapter)

- Grade Grievance Procedures (1997)

### **Faculty Institutes**

Faculty Institutes are held in the Fall and the Spring and have continued to be opportunities for enrichment, debate and interaction.

Topics for Faculty Institutes have included:

- Writing Across the Curriculum
- Title VI Project to Expand and Enrich Undergraduate International Education and Foreign Languages Studies at Webster University
- Teaching Strategies
- Webster's Growth
- Educational Philosophies at Webster - Past, Present and Future
- A Mind is a Terrible thing to Waste (Accessibility Issues)
- Professional and Internationalizing Applications of Computer Mediated Communication
- Multiple Intelligences
- The Debate Over Afrocentrism and Issues of Race on Campus
- Grades and Grading at Webster

### **Governance Structure through Spring, 1996**

The Faculty Constituent Assembly functioned as a "town hall" governance body; all changes were brought to the faculty as a whole for decision.

The Faculty Executive Committee (membership of eight plus the Chair) met weekly and represented faculty opinion to non-faculty constituencies. The FEC ran the annual committee elections, communicated regularly with established faculty committees and made replacement appointments when needed due to leaves or resignations. The FEC also appointed faculty to *ad hoc* committees as they were formed.

The FEC oversaw agenda for monthly FCA meetings and for the annual Fall and Spring Faculty Institutes, determining the major topic for each and selecting a committee to formulate the actual programming. The FEC Chair wrote the Faculty Report, a regular communication from the FEC to the FCA.

## **Current Faculty Governance Structure, adopted Spring, 1996**

Debate about reforming governance in the late 1980's had not produced any significant structural change. However, subsequent to the academic restructuring dividing the university into five academic units (School of Business and Technology, College of Fine Arts, School of Communications, School of Education, College of Arts and Sciences), it was determined that the faculty governance system should be examined to determine what changes, if any, were needed. A Governance Reform Task Force was appointed by the Faculty Executive Committee, with broad constituent representation, to look at the situation. Implicit in their charge was the hope that greater efficiency could be achieved without losing the character of open communication that had marked governance tradition.

In the spring of 1996, after a year of work by a Governance Reform Task Force, the Faculty Constituent Assembly voted to make major changes in the faculty governance system. Highlights of those include:

Changing the Faculty Constituent Assembly, which met monthly, to the Faculty Assembly which meets twice a semester.

Elimination of the eight -person Faculty Executive Committee, and replacement with a new representation-based sixteen-person Faculty Senate. The Senate has decision-making power and holds open meetings.

The title of the FEC Chair was changed to the President of the Senate and the new position of Vice President of the Senate was created to delegate some of the work-load of the President.

All other powers and duties of the FEC and FEC Chair were retained by the Senate and Senate President.

### **American Association of University Professors**

A Webster AAUP Chapter was established in 1993. Subsequent to this, the Faculty Constituent Assembly voted to endorse and include in the Handbook the AAUP "Statement on Academic Freedom" and to include the 1940 and 1970 statements and commentary, with the stipulation that current Handbook language regarding FDL be included. The FCA also endorsed and included in the Handbook the AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics.

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