# Student Membership on Standing Committees at Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy

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The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence and extent of participation of pharmacy students on standing committees at colleges and schools of pharmacy. A 25-item questionnaire was mailed to the 79 accredited colleges and schools of pharmacy. A total of 64 questionnaires (81 percent) were returned. Thirty-eight respondents reported that BS in Pharmacy students served on one or more committees, 49 indicated that entry-level PharmD students served, 27 reported post-BS PharmD students, 23 reported MS students, and 29 indicated that PhD students served on one or more committees. The committees on which entry-level students most commonly served were curriculum, admissions, and disciplinary. Students tended to be voting members and were perceived to be contributors to committee activities. Students should play an active role on committees, not only because this is an accreditation standard, but because serving on committees exposes them to professional governance and professional socialization.

#### INTRODUCTION

The American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE) recently adopted a revised set of standards for colleges and schools of pharmacy titled Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for the Professional Program in Pharmacy Leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy Degree. Standard 20 of this document indicates that colleges and schools of pharmacy should show evidence that student representation exists on appropriate college committees and policy-development bodies(1). The following assumptions appear to be implicit in this standard: colleges and schools have committees, there is some procedure to determine the committees that are appropriate for student members, and

students can contribute to committees. There is no indication whether the ACPE believes that students currently serve on committees, what the students' roles currently are, or whether students contribute to the mission of committees. There are limited published data about the types of college and school of pharmacy committees and the roles that students play on these committees.

Carter and Draugalis(2) surveyed colleges and schools of pharmacy in 1994 to determine the structure, function, and duties of curriculum committees. They reported that students served as voting members on the majority of curriculum committees at these institutions. A review of the literature has failed to uncover additional data concerning

Table I. Standing committees at colleges of pharmacy (n = 64)

Committee	Number of colleges with committee (percent)
Curriculum	63 (100) <sup>a</sup>
Admissions	60 (94)
Honors and awards	50 (78)
Scholastic	49 (77)
Strategic planning	$36(57)^a$
Disciplinary	34 (55) <sup>b</sup>
Library	32 (50)
Research	28 (44) <sup>a</sup>
Facilities/space	26 (41)
Safety	23 (36)
Faculty evaluation	$20(32)^a$
Student affairs	19 (31) <sup>b</sup>
Commencement	16 (25)
Examination schedule	4 (6)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Data not supplied by one respondent; in these cases n=63.

entry-level and/or graduate pharmacy student involvement on standing committees at colleges and schools of pharmacy. Thus, the extent to which students participate in the committee structure at the present time is unknown.

In Background Paper I, the Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education noted that pharmaceutical education is responsible for preparing students to enter the practice of pharmacy and to function as professionals, and should encourage students to take active roles in shaping policies, practices, and the future direction of the profession(3). The Commission also noted that entry-level students need to develop effective interpersonal and intergroup behaviors(4). In addition, Chalmers and associates emphasized the need for pharmacy education to provide a consistent and extensive framework of professional socialization throughout a pharmacy student's education(5). Involvement on college and school of pharmacy committees may provide students with experiences that will enable them to take a more active role in their chosen profession, and may enhance students' socialization skills.

The purpose of the current study was to determine the types of standing committees at colleges and schools of pharmacy throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, the standing committees on which pharmacy students serve, the degree of student involvement on college and school-wide committees, and the manner in which students are recommended for and appointed to these committees. This information also may provide a basis for colleges and schools of pharmacy to compare their level of student involvement within the committee structure with other institutions.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

A self-administered questionnaire was developed to determine the prevalence and extent of participation of entry-level pharmacy students (both BS in Pharmacy and PharmD), post-baccalaureate PharmD students, MS students, and PhD students on standing committees at colleges and schools of pharmacy. There was no attempt to obtain data on student involvement on their own committees (e.g., social committees, student government, or professional organizations), on college and school ad hoc committees, or on university committees (if appropriate).

Two persons with expertise in survey design and the dean of students at two colleges of pharmacy reviewed a draft of the questionnaire to assess its completeness, ease of completion, and overall suitability. Following modification, the 25-item questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the university's institutional review board. The questionnaire listed 14 committees, but allowed respondents to add additional committees. The instrument was mailed in December, 1996 to the dean of students at the 79 accredited colleges and schools of pharmacy in the United States and Puerto Rico. In addition to the questionnaire, the survey packet included descriptions of each type of committee (Appendix) so that if an individual college or school used a different name for the committee the survey could still be completed, a cover letter, and a postage-paid return envelope. The cover letter included a statement that the results from individual respondents would not be shared with others, and only aggregate data would be presented and published. Duplicate packets were mailed five and ten weeks later (January and March, 1997) to nonrespondents. Data were entered into a spread sheet program (Microsoft Excel) and means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated.

#### **RESULTS**

A total of 64 questionnaires were returned for an overall response rate of 81 percent. The data from these questionnaires formed the basis of this study and were analyzed according to degree program. Nonrespondents were evenly distributed based on geographical location and whether they were state-supported or private institutions.

#### **Committees at Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy**

As noted in Table I, the most common standing committee at colleges and schools of pharmacy was the curriculum committee, followed closely by the admissions committee. Of the four colleges and schools of pharmacy without an admissions committee, two indicated that these duties were conducted by other committees (*i.e.*, student services committee and student affairs committee). The honors and awards committee and the scholastic committee also were commonly reported. In addition to the 14 committees defined in the questionnaire, respondents reported the existence of several others including, academic affairs (two respondents), various advisory committees (seven respondents), affirmative action/minority affairs (four respondents), computers and/or technology (eight respondents), and student/faculty relations (four respondents).

#### **Student Involvement in Standing Committees**

Most colleges and schools had entry-level student representation on at least one committee, while many also reported post-BS PharmD student and/or graduate student representation. Specifically, 38 respondents (95 percent of the responding colleges and schools that offered this degree) reported that BS in Pharmacy students served on one or more committees, and 49 respondents (96 percent) noted that entry-level PharmD students served on at least one committee. Respondents from three colleges and schools of pharmacy noted that entry-level students did not serve on at least one standing committee. Twenty-seven respondents (64 percent) noted that post-BS PharmD students served on one or more committees. Twenty-three respondents (55 percent) reported that MS students served and 29 respondents (66 percent) reported that PhD students served on one

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup>Data not supplied by two respondents; in these cases n=62.

Table II. Number (percent) of colleges and schools in which students served on specific standing committees

Committee	BS	Entry-level PharmD	Post-BS PharmD	MS	PhD
Curriculum Serve Do Not Serve	(n=38) <sup>a,b</sup> 33 (87%) 2 (5%)	(n=49) <sup>ab</sup> 41 (84%) 3 (6%)	(n=27) <sup>a,b</sup> 8 (30%) 14 (52%)	(n=22) <sup>a,b</sup> 0 (0%) 19(86%)	(n=28) <sup>a,b</sup> 1 (4%) 21 (75%)
Admissions	(n=35)	(n=45)	(n=26)	(n=21)	(n=27)
Serve	12 (34%)	22 (49%)	8 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	21 (60%)	20 (44%)	15 (58%)	18 (86%)	22 (81%)
Honors & Awards	(n=30)	(n=37)	(n=24)	(n=20)	(n=24)
Serve	8 (27%)	9 (24%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	22 (73%)	26 (70%)	18 (75%)	17 (85%)	19 (79%)
Scholastic	(n=27)	(n=39)	(n=21)	(n=18)	(n=24)
Serve	7 (26%)	8 (21%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	19 (70%)	30 (77%)	16 (76%)	15 (83%)	18 (75%)
Strategic Planning	(n=21)	(n=31)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=16)
Serve	5 (24%)	8 (26%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (6%)
Do Not Serve	16 (76%)	21 (68%)	11 (85%)	10 (77%)	12 (75%)
Disciplinary	(n=23)	(n=28)	(n=14)	(n=10)	(n=15)
Serve	16 (70%)	20 (71%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)
Do Not Serve	4 (17%)	4 (14%)	9 (64%)	7 (70%)	10 (67%)
Library	(n=20)	(n=23)	(n=15)	(n=16)	(n=18)
Serve	5 (25%)	3 (13%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	4 (22%)
Do Not Serve	15 (75%)	19 (83%)	10 (67%)	12 (75%)	10 (56%)
Research	(n=17)	(n=23)	(n=9)	(n=13)	(n=18)
Serve	1 (6%)	1 (4%)	1 (11%)	4 (31%)	10 (56%)
Do Not Serve	15 (88%)	20 (87%)	7 (78%)	5 (38%)	3 (17%)
Facilities/space	(n=18)	(n=19)	(n=12)	(n=12)	(n=13)
Serve	4 (22%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
Do Not Serve	14 (78%)	16 (84%)	10 (83%)	9 (75%)	10 (77%)
Safety	(n=13)	(n=19)	NA	(n=7)	(n=10)
Serve	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	—	0 (0%)	4 (40%)
Do Not Serve	10 (77%)	18 (95%)	—	7 (100%)	5 (50%)
Faculty Evaluation	(n=16)	(n=14)	(n=9)	(n=11)	(n=12)
Serve	4 (25%)	4 (29%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	12 (75%)	8 (57%)	6 (67%)	8 (73%)	8 (67%)
Student Affairs	(n=11)	(n=16)	(n=9)	(n=9)	(n=11)
Serve	8 (73%)	11 (69%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	3 (27%)	2 (13%)	8 (89%)	8 (89%)	9 (82%)
Commencement	(n=8)	(n=10)	(n=8)	(n=6)	(n=9)
Serve	7 (87%)	8 (80%)	2 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Do Not Serve	1 (13%)	2 (20%)	5 (63%)	4 (67%)	5 (56%)
Examination Schedule Serve Do Not Serve	(n=2) 2 (100%) 0 (0%)	(n=3) 3 (100%) 0 (0%)	(n=1) 0 (0%) 1 (100%)	(n=0) 	(n=0) 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Number of colleges and schools of pharmacy that had the specific committee, offered the degree program noted, and had students who served on any standing committee

#### or more committees.

In order to determine whether students served on specific committees, data were grouped based upon two factors: presence of the committee at colleges and schools of pharmacy, and availability of the degree programs. These data

are depicted in Table II. The committees on which entry-level students most commonly served were curriculum (87 percent for BS in Pharmacy and 84 percent for PharmD), disciplinary (70 percent for BS and 71 percent for PharmD), and admissions (34 percent for BS and 49 percent for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup> Numbers and percentages do not add up to the total number of respondents or 100 percent, respectively due to non-reported data NA — Information not available

Table III. Entry-level student voting status on select committees

	Entry-level degree program		
Committee	BS	PharmD	
Curriculum Committee	(n=33) <sup>a</sup>	(n=39) <sup>a</sup>	
Vote	25 (76%)	29 (74%) <sup>b</sup>	
Do not vote	3 (9%)	5 (13%) <sup>b</sup>	
Disciplinary Committee	(n=16)	(n=21)	
Vote	11 (69%)	14 (67%)	
Do not vote	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	
Admissions Committee	(n=12)	(n=22)	
Vote	12 (100%)	17 (77%)	
Do not vote	0 (0%)	3 (14%)	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>Number of colleges and schools of pharmacy that had the specific committee, offered the degree program noted, and had students serving on the particular standing committee.

PharmD). The least likely committee on which entry-level students served was the research committee, followed by the facilities/space, and safety committees. Although the existence of an examination scheduling committee was reported by four colleges and schools, in institutions in which it existed, students always served.

Post-BS PharmD degree students served most commonly on the curriculum (30 percent) and admissions (31 percent) committees. MS and/or PhD students most frequently served on the research, library, and/or safety committee.

For those committees on which entry-level students most commonly served, they were usually voting members (see Table III). For example, students were reported to be voting members of the curriculum committee by approximately 75 percent of the respondents. In one case a respondent reported that voting was not applicable to the curriculum committee.

The mean number of entry-level students who served on the curriculum committee was two, representing 20 percent of the total committee membership (*i.e.*, 10 total members). In the case of the admissions committee a mean of two BS and five entry-level PharmD students served, comprising 17 percent and 41 percent of the total committee membership, respectively.

The role of students on the admissions committee and the scholastic committee was specifically explored. Of the colleges and schools that had BS in Pharmacy students on the admissions committee, 50 percent (six respondents) allowed students to have access to applicant files and interview applicants. Of the 22 institutions that had entry-level PharmD students on the admissions committee, 64 percent allowed students to have access to applicant files and interview applicants. Entry-level students served as tour guides as well; 50 percent of BS students and 73 percent of PharmD students on the admissions committee performed this function.

Two of the seven (29 percent) colleges and schools of pharmacy that had BS in Pharmacy students on the scholastic committee allowed student committee members access to other students' files; five of the eight (63 percent) with entry-level PharmD students allowed them to have access to other students' files.

Table IV. Manner in which students were recommended for membership on standing committees (n = 63)<sup>a</sup>

Method	Number (percent) of colleges
Recommended by a Dean	39 (62%)
Recommended by Student	
Government	32 (35%)
Elected by Individual Classes	17 (27%)
Volunteer	14 (22%)
Elected by Student Body	3 (5%)
Recommended by ASP Chapter <sup>b</sup>	3 (5%)
Recommended by PLS Chapter <sup>0</sup>	0 (0%)
Other <sup>d</sup>	7 (11%)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Multiple responses existed, as different methods were used for different committees.

Selected by deans and department chairpersons

Selected by committee members and/or chairpersons

Recommended by deans' advisory boards

Recommended by manager of student services

Recommended by student executive committee

By virtue of position in student organizations Recommended by the dean's council

#### **Student Selection for Committees**

At 39 institutions (62 percent of the cases), students were recommended to serve as members of standing committees by a dean (see Table IV). Direct student input—such as via student government or individual class elections—was commonly reported. Other methods noted by some respondents included recommendations by deans' advisory boards or councils, selections by the committees themselves, and recommendations by students' executive committees.

The ultimate decision to appoint students was most commonly made by a dean; one institution reported that the student body made the final decision. Of the 64 reporting colleges and schools, 48 (75 percent) indicated that students were appointed for one-year terms and 11 (17 percent) indicated that appointments were variable depending on the committee. The longest appointment, noted by one respondent, was four years for the disciplinary committee.

An attempt was made to ascertain why students were selected to serve on certain committees but were excluded from others. The reasons cited for appointing students were "when the committee addresses student issues" or "when student input is valuable and/or unique." The reasons provided for not appointing students were usually related to confidentiality and/or legal issues.

#### **Restrictions Placed on Student Members**

Respondents provided information on restrictions placed on student service. Of the responding institutions, 29 (45 percent) did not allow students on academic probation to serve on committees. The response "not being on academic probation," however, was not defined in the survey, so this cannot be equated to a specific grade point average (GPA). A minimum GPA of 2.0 was required by 15 (23 percent) of the respondents. Four respondents indicated that a GPA of at least 3.0 was required, but in one instance this restriction related solely to the scholastic committee. Five (eight percent) of the respondents indicated that students must be elected officers in order to serve on committees.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup>At one institution, two students served on the committee; one student voted and one did not.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup>ASP = Academy of Students of Pharmacy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>c</sup>PLS = Phi Lambda Sigma

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>d</sup>Responses were as follows:

#### **Perceived Value of Student Members**

Respondents were queried as to the overall level of contribution students make to committees. Using a 5-point Likert-like scale (where 1 is minimal and 5 is maximal) the level of student contribution was judged to be  $3.27 \pm 1.15$  (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation; n = 62). Four (six percent) of the respondents reported that student contribution was minimal, while 10 (16 percent) respondents reported that student contribution was maximal.

#### DISCUSSION

The present study revealed that pharmacy students served on a variety of committees. Thus, it appears that the vast majority of colleges and schools of pharmacy are in compliance with ACPE standard 20. In addition, ACPE standard 21 points out that student input should be sought in program evaluation and development(1). Encouraging student involvement in the committee structure may help to meet this standard as well.

Fifty percent of the colleges and schools of pharmacy reported the existence of seven or more of the 14 standing committees noted on the questionnaire. The fact that the curriculum committee was present at all the responding institutions is not surprising given the nature of pharmaceutical education and the dramatic changes that have occurred during the 1990s.

Entry-level students served most frequently on committees directly affecting their educational experience and where their input was perceived to be useful and necessary, e.g., curriculum, admissions, and disciplinary. The examination scheduling committee was the least frequent committee cited by respondents, but when and where it existed students always served, which is consistent with the great interest students have in the scheduling of examinations.

The only study with which to compare any of the present data, profiled curriculum committees at colleges and schools of pharmacy. In the study by Carter and Draugalis(2), 90 percent of the respondents indicated that students served on the curriculum committee and the size of the committee was reported to be approximately 10 members. These findings are similar to those of the present study.

Students usually served as voting members of the curriculum, disciplinary, and admissions committee at colleges and schools of pharmacy. Overall, students were judged to contribute to the committees. Taken collectively, it appears that students are perceived by the respondents to be valued committee members.

It appears that entry-level PharmD students are more involved than BS in Pharmacy students on certain committees. For example, entry-level PharmD students comprised 41 percent of the admissions committee, whereas BS in Pharmacy students represented only 17 percent. It is unclear as to why this apparent difference exists.

In general, post-BS PharmD students were less likely to serve on committees than were entry-level students. It is important to note that one limitation of the present study was a lack of delineation between traditional and nontraditional post-BS PharmD degree programs. The role that nontraditional PharmD students play in the committee structure should be addressed in future research.

Although not a focus of the present study, MS and/or PhD students most frequently served on committees such as the research and safety committees. Such committees' ac-

tivities would lend themselves to input from graduate students. It is interesting to note that the service pattern of post-BS PharmD students more closely resembled those of the entry-level students than the MS and/or PhD students, *e.g.*, service on the curriculum and admissions committees. This may be due to the fact that post-BS Pharm D programs may be viewed by some persons as an extension of entry-level education, or because post-BS PharmD programs are always administered through colleges and schools of pharmacy whereas MS and/or PhD programs may be administered through other campus schools or divisions. It is also possible that MS and/or PhD students may not have an entry-level pharmacy education, and thus may not be in a position to provide appropriate input to committees that deal primarily with issues that affect entry-level students.

Student involvement on committees that routinely examine the academic records of fellow or prospective students has ethical as well as legal concerns. As shown in the present study, there is no consensus among colleges and schools of pharmacy regarding access to academic records. Entry-level PharmD students more commonly had access to academic records than did BS in Pharmacy students who served on the admissions and scholastic committees. If student involvement in college and school of pharmacy committees increases, this issue should be studied as it may be desirable to establish guidelines.

One potential source of concern raised by the results of the present study was the lack of stringent controls placed on students who served on committees. The survey did not, however, examine whether students with low academic averages actually served on committees, so it cannot be assumed that the lack of limitations means that academically poor students served. Colleges and schools need to consider whether marginal students can afford to spend time on noncurricular issues. Thus, if student involvement on committees increases and the academic demands of curricula are increased, it would be prudent for colleges and schools of pharmacy to consider implementing more stringent guidelines for eligible students.

The results of this study need to be placed into the context of the evolving nature of pharmaceutical education. In the AACP's Background Paper I, one of the cited missions of pharmaceutical education is to encourage students to take active roles in shaping the future direction of the profession(3). Background Paper II notes that the competencies expected to be addressed by entry-level pharmacy education include effective interpersonal and intergroup behaviors, and the development of leadership skills(4). We believe that student service on college and school of pharmacy committees can assist in the development of these skills and that the use of the committee structure as a method of developing students' skills may be an underemployed, but readily available resource. Student activity on committees may also provide valuable input for the continued improvement of an educational institution.

Another potential benefit of student participation in the committee process is the enhancement of professional socialization. In its report, the "Council of Faculties Committee on Changing the Culture Within Our Schools and Colleges of Pharmacy" encouraged an exchange of information regarding methods of professional socialization, including student involvement in organizations and service-based learning(5). It is likely that students who serve on commit tees will develop important life-long learning tools such as improved communication skills, the ability to work within a group, and organizational skills. Future studies should address this hypothesis.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, numerous committees are in place at colleges and schools of pharmacy. Students served on many of these committees and were perceived to provide a valuable contribution. The types of committees on which students served, however, varied by degree program. Student involvement on committees should benefit the institutions and the students, as well as satisfy ACPE requirements. For example, the institutions should benefit by receiving feedback and input from its "customers" while students can benefit from observing and participating in the committee process.

There appear to be minimal academic or other types of restrictions placed on students selected to serve on committees. In addition, there does not appear to be a consensus on the role of students on the admissions and scholastic committees. It appears that more specific guidelines are needed. Future studies should determine the role of nontraditional PharmD students on committees, and should assess whether participation on committees significantly enhances students' professional socialization.

Am. J. Pharm. Educ., 62, 66-71(1998); received 7/28/97, accepted 12/10/97.

#### References

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- (3) Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education, "Background Paper I: What is the mission of pharmaceutical education? *ibid.*, 57, 374-376(1993).
- (4) Commission to Implement Change in Pharmaceutical Education, "Background Paper II: Entry-level, curricular outcomes, curricular content and educational process," American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, Alexandria, VA (1191); see also, *Am. J. Pharm. Educ.*, 57, 377-385(1993).
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# APPENDIX. DESCRIPTIONS OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

#### Admissions

Responsible for reviewing applications for admission, determining eligibility for admission, conducting interviews, and/or making decisions on acceptance of students.

#### Commencement

Determines the proper procedure as well as the mechanics of the commencement exercise. Selecting commencement speakers may be part of this committee's responsibilities.

#### Curriculum

Responsible for development, implementation, revision, and/or monitoring of the curriculum.

#### **Disciplinary**

Handles cases of academic and/or professional misconduct by students and recommends or implements appropriate resolutions.

#### **Examination Schedule**

Responsible for arranging a schedule of examinations for required and/or elective courses (mid-semester and/or finals).

#### **Faculty Evaluation**

Recommends procedures and standards for evaluation of faculty teaching effectiveness and scholarly productivity, and may conduct or supervise student course evaluations.

#### Facilities/Space

Responsible for the allocation and use of space, makes recommendations regarding renovations and expansion.

#### **Honors and Awards**

Responsible for selecting students to receive various awards, scholarships, and other honors.

# Library

Works with the library staff to ensure adequate books, journals, databases, and other resources are available for use by college/school faculty and students.

#### Research

Identifies faculty research interests and needs in order to facilitate the research activities of the faculty. Reviews and reports the progress of research within the college/school and may determine ways and means of procuring extramural funding.

### Safety

Responsible for the maintenance of a safe work/research environment. May also be involved in the training of employees regarding safety.

## Scholastic (Academic Standing)

Recommends to the faculty guidelines for regulating academic progression. Monitors academic progress of students and enforces the academic requirements. May include determination of probationary status and recommendations for dismissal from the program. The committee may conduct programs for students (*e.g.*, counseling and registration).

#### Strategic Planning

Responsible for developing a short-term and/or long-term strategic plan for the college/school of pharmacy.

#### **Student Affairs**

Responsible for all student activities, including advisement and registration, professional activities, club activities, and social activities.

#### Other

Includes any faculty committees that exist that do not encompass any of the aforementioned activities. Committees that consist entirely of student members should not be included.