

5-6-2010

Faculty Senate Resolution 10-07

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Recommended Citation

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, "Faculty Senate Resolution 10-07" (2010). *LSU Faculty Senate Publications*. 389.

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LSU Faculty Senate Resolution 10–07:
Sunshine on the Composition of Advisory Committees at all Levels of the University
Sponsored by Senators Dominique G. Homberger and Charles Delzell

Whereas PS-36-T, PS-36-NT, PS-109, and the policies of the Graduate School provide for the appointment of various advisory committees and boards whose confidential advice to administrators can have serious consequences for faculty members, and

Whereas some administrators have refused to disclose the names of the members of such committees and/or boards, on the ground that such bodies are purely advisory in nature, and

Whereas “Star Chambers”¹ have no place in civil society, let alone in a university, and

Whereas, although government executives, such as the U.S. President, may obtain confidential advice, the names of those advisors are nevertheless a matter of public record, and, similarly, although jury deliberations in a trial are secret, the names of the jurors are nevertheless public, and

Whereas Louisiana’s Sunshine Laws include within their definition of a “public body” various committees and boards, even if their function is purely advisory,²

Therefore be it resolved that the Faculty Senate recommends that every unit of the University (e.g., departments, colleges, the Graduate School, Academic Affairs, the Chancellor’s Office, the offices of the various vice-chancellors, and the LSU System President’s Office) post on its website the membership of all advisory bodies (e.g., all boards, councils, commissions, committees, subcommittees, and similar bodies) that report to that unit, with the exception of *ad hoc* committees mentoring or reviewing individual faculty members (e.g., committees related to PS-36-T, PS-36-NT, PS-109 or PS-69), which need not be disclosed to anyone other than the respective faculty members on request; and

Therefore be it further resolved that policy statements such as PS-36-T, PS-36-NT, PS-109, and the policies of the Graduate School, be revised so as to require disclosure of the membership of the various advisory bodies mentioned in those policies, as provided above; and

Therefore be it further resolved that this resolution does not recommend any change to existing policies on the question of whether, or to whom, the advice or reports of the above advisory bodies should be disclosed.

¹ In modern usage, legal or administrative bodies with strict, arbitrary rulings and secretive membership and proceedings are sometimes called, metaphorically or poetically, star chambers.—Wikipedia.

² La. R.S. 42:4.2 “Definitions”: “... ‘Public body’ means village, town, and city governing authorities; parish governing authorities; school boards and boards of levee and port commissioners; boards of publicly operated utilities; planning, zoning, and airport commissions; and *any other state, parish, municipal, or special district boards, commissions, or authorities, and those of any political subdivision thereof, where such body possesses policy making, advisory, or administrative functions, including any committee or subcommittee of any of these bodies enumerated in this paragraph.*” (Emphasis added.)

La. R.S. 42:4.1: “... the provisions of R.S. 42:4.1 through 10 shall be construed liberally....”