

LAFAYETTE

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

To: President Byerly

From: The Administrative Council

Date: February 17, 2017

Re: George Wharton Pepper Prize Voting Procedures

Mission

The Administrative Council is dedicated to improving the experience of Administrative Staff at Lafayette College. On an ongoing basis, the Council identifies specific conditions for enhancement, sets measurable goals, and works collaboratively with involved parties to achieve them. This process is driven by feedback from Administrative Staff and any relevant data available.

Background

Drawing from the work of a small committee convened by Dr. Hannah Stewart-Gambino in 2012-2013 (David Kafafian '13, Sue Herschlag, Caroline Lang '13, John Meier, Lisa Rex and Amber Zuber), we propose the following rationale to include FTE administrators in the voting process for the annual selection of the Pepper Prize recipient.

The Administrative Steering Committee (now called the Administrative Council) revisited the Pepper Prize voting issue beginning in 2015. The committee questioned various faculty members, administrators and Deans to determine how to extend voting privileges to all FTE Administrative Staff on campus. The general consensus over many conversations revealed that administrators have a vested interest in participating in the voting process, since so many work closely with students. We also reviewed historical documents related to the Pepper Prize and from our research and questioning we found no evidence that might prohibit FTE Administrative staff from participating in the voting process. FTE Administrative Staff include lecturers, mentors and those administrators who employ students throughout the duration of the their college experience.

Upon further investigation, we found that the Pepper Prize does not bear a "true" deed of gift. Building on research conducted earlier and furthered by the Administrative Council, we have consulted and interviewed the Faculty Governance Committee, the Dean of the Faculty, various faculty members, Student Government and other senior administrators. Our only conclusion is that no one can definitively state who bears the responsibility to decide on voting eligibility for the Pepper Prize recipient. The majority of Administrative Council consistently reiterates our astonishment that administrators have yet to be included despite several requests and studies on the issue. Indeed, it was assumed by many with whom we spoke that we already did participate and have been voting for years. We also discovered current practices do not adhere to the

voting regiment outlined in the historical documents (and have not been for the memory of the faculty committee we questioned). For example, although the records outline specific instructions for voting by paper ballot behind the secured doors of Colton Chapel, the current voting process is conducted using Qualtrics.

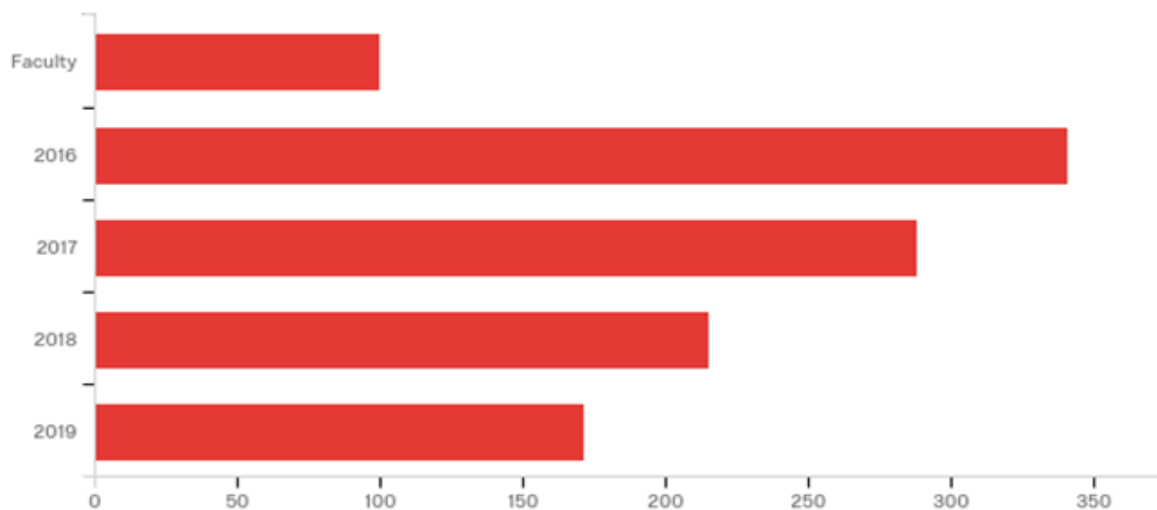
Rationale

The historical documents on record define the “Lafayette Ideal’ [as] a well-rounded, educated man [sic] who adds to a sound academic record noteworthy participation in college activities which contribute to the advancement of the College on and off the campus. Academic brilliance or athletic prowess alone is not the criterion.” In addition to faculty’s assessment of students’ intellectual talent and propensity for academic rigor, administrators are also uniquely positioned to contribute to the selection of the Pepper Prize recipient. Administrators have ample opportunity to observe students in various settings outside of the classroom, where they grow as leaders, mentors, tutors, athletes, peer educators and volunteers.

As we move toward the goal of creating a holistic, transformative learning experience through *Connected Communities*, we acknowledge, institutionally, the significance of students’ learning that occurs outside the classroom. Moreover, if we consider administrators as valued contributors to the educational experience, their exclusion from the voting process undermines the value of those contributions and our shared investment with faculty in shaping what we champion as the “Lafayette Ideal.” In short, the exclusion of administrators in this process is antithetical to the idea of a Connected Community.

2016 Voting Record

Previously, concerns regarding the impact of adding additional votes to the process had been voiced; therefore, we feel is important to note voter participation rates from the 2016 process:



Answer	%	Count
Faculty	8.97%	100

2016	30.58%	341
2017	25.83%	288
2018	19.28%	215
2019	15.34%	171
Total	100%	1115

As you can see, faculty currently represent less than 10% of the vote. If there was a concern that adding administrators to the vote would skew the process, we believe that adding administrators with officers of the college would increase the academic voice.

Recommendation

We recommend extending Pepper Prize voting eligibility to all FTE administrators on campus beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year. The current exclusion of FTE administrators not only undermines the inclusive description of the “Lafayette Ideal” but also disenfranchises a majority of the Lafayette community who also serve as educators and as essential parts of the student experience. The current practice is antithetical to our values as a community, one that is no longer comprised solely of faculty and students.

Please contact us should you need additional information to move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Hannah Tatu, on behalf of
Administrative Council, Spring Semester '17