Thank you for your request that the Senate Rules and Elections Committee (SREC) examine a request from a college dean as to whether the dean’s understanding is correct on the vetting of changes to an academic program of that college. We much appreciate the inquiry of the college dean to correctly understand what the Senate Rules both permit and require in terms of vetting academic proposals. The current vetting rules were unanimously adopted by the University Senate on May 7, 2012, after the prior circulation of the draft changes to all University senators, which includes the Provost, the deans of all health care colleges and other colleges, and all the elected Faculty Senators from those colleges.

All professional health care program proposals go to HCCC. It is correct that proposed changes to an existing professional health care program that are approved by the college Faculty must be submitted to the Health Care Colleges Council (HCCC). It is correct that the University Senate has delegated to the HCCC the authority to make final approval of those changes and report those changes to the Senate Council.

College Faculty Discretion to Reach HCCC on Other Proposals is Unfettered. We emphasize that the Senate Rules allow a College Faculty of a health care college to seek the review of the HCCC on any undergraduate or graduate program proposal that does not otherwise require HCCC review. The Senate Rules also safeguard the academic prerogative of the College Faculty not to seek that review if in the College Faculty’s judgment an optional HCCC review is not sufficiently warranted. In turn, the Senate Rules do not prohibit in any way the HCCC from agreeing to provide a discretionary review. In response to a request, the SREC last May 17, 2013, rendered a written rules interpretation explaining this College Faculty option to the Provost, to the academic associate deans of health care colleges and other colleges, and to the HCCC coordinator (attachment 1), and explaining that this interpretation will be noted into the Senate Rules (attachment 2).

Operational Facilitation of Option to Reach to HCCC on Other Proposals. Also, the Senate Council Chair wrote the HCCC Chair on November 6, 2013 (attachment 3), explaining the Senate Council Office’s further facilitation of this college option. As had been discussed at a May 9, 2013 meeting of the SC Chair and SREC Chair with representatives of the administrations of health care colleges (attachment 3), the SC Office then secured the programming of eCATS to send all health care college
undergraduate and graduate proposals to the HCCC unless the college specifically ‘opts out’ for that particular proposal (attachment 4). The same principle can extend to upcoming eCATs programming for program change proposals, and even now while program proposals are still being submitted by email pdf. Thus, it is clear that the Senate Council Office has maximized reasonable operational deference to the HCCC while still preserving the integrity of the educational policy role of each College Faculty.

In summary, under the ‘Provost’ organization of the University, adopted by the UK Board of Trustees in 2001, no college or group of colleges has an academic status that is exalted above any other. The University Senate program vetting rules adopted unanimously in May 2012 reflect both this academic equality and the need for expediency in times of short resources. Hence, the only Senate procedural vetting requirements are made on a program by program basis, not the pre-Provost ‘silo’ organization that sectored health colleges as a block into an academic status different than other University colleges. Undergraduate proposals are required to go to the UC (which has a health college member), graduate proposals are required to go to the GC (which has 3 health college members), and health professional program proposals are required to go to the HCCC.

However, as elaborated above, any College Faculty has the unfettered discretion to opt at any time to seek the review of any other academic council that is not otherwise required to review the proposal, and any academic council can agree to provide the discretionary review. In fact, any dean can propose at any time to the College Faculty that it approve a standing college educational policy that the review of the UC, GC or HCCC will be requested on proposals not otherwise required to be reviewed by the particular Senate academic council.

We make a standing offer here for the Chair of the SREC to meet with any dean, with any group of deans, with the UC, GC or HCCC, or with any elected College Faculty Council, to further explain and discuss the above.

Senate Rules and Elections Committee

Davy Jones, Chair
Gail Brion
Robert Grossman
David Pienkowski
Connie Wood

Cc: Provost, College Deans, HCC Academic Associate Deans; Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, Health Care Colleges Council