Brief History of the Coordinator Position

One of the Task Force's goals is to provide as full a context as possible for subsequent discussions as to what the University should do. With this in mind we believed it would be prudent to do some investigation into the history of the position from its inception. Knowing the origins of the position, the underlying philosophy that shaped it, and how it has evolved would all be helpful. We interviewed five different faculty who were here in the first fifteen years of the institution: William Lubenow, Michael Frank, Frank Cerreto, Peter Straub, and David Lester. We tried to interview both Marilyn Vito and Bess Katrins but were unsuccessful. In addition to this we reviewed what relevant documents we could obtain from the Union and University archives, in particular the previous agreements.

There was general consensus among those we interviewed that a shared set of underlying assumptions of founding faculty shaped the origins of the position. However, to say that this amounted to a "philosophy of organizational structure" would be too strong, too systematic. It was more a matter of responding to two different factors predominant at the time Stockton was founded: the fact that most of the faculty were coming straight out of graduate school and the ongoing war in Vietnam. Both of these conditions lead to a certain distrust of authority, hence, no chairs, no departments. On the other hand they recognized that there needed to be some sort of position that would handle the administrative needs of the academic programs. So the concept of the coordinator was a way of having some sort of structure, but not a formal one.

The duties and responsibilities of the position, along with the compensation were not well defined. One of the interviewees described it as a "first among equals," and explained that the coordinator was not to organize the program; that was a function of the program itself and meant to be reached through cooperative activity. For example, the Coordinator would be responsible for scheduling a meeting to discuss tenure and promotion of a colleague, but one vote toward the decision. The lack of clear definition as to the duties and responsibilities of the position is borne out in the documents librarian archivist Heather Perez located from 1973, 1974, 1983 and 1990. There is no specific outline of what is required of a coordinator until the 1999 MOA.

What was consistent through the years was that the position was not to have the type of supervisory authority which was core to what they viewed as the traditional role of a chairperson. One example of the latter was when Adrian Jaffe became the chair of the division of Arts and Humanities, Dr. Jaffee went to the coordinator and told him to "check up" on a faculty member. The coordinator refused, insisting this was not appropriate for one faculty member to do to another.

This is further complicated by the fact that that the duties outlined for the chairperson role in the 1983 MOA contain elements of what would eventually become the duties of School Deans, (e.g., budgetary responsibilities, teaching schedules, supervision of administrative staff) but also those of the coordinator, (e.g. teaching in the program, develop and review curriculum, hiring faculty). Given the lack of specificity of the coordinator responsibilities in the MOA prior to 1999 it is reasonable to assume that during this time period there was an ongoing conversation about the nature of the two different roles. To some extent this was crystalized during President Ferris' tenure when what had been called "Chairpersons" became "Deans" and fully management positions.

Since 1999, the duties and responsibilities of the Coordinator have been explicitly detailed in local agreements. In this time, both the responsibilities and compensation have changed in concert with both the increase in the number of faculty (Fall 13 = 291; Fall 18 = 344 preliminary), and the dramatic increase in the number of students (Fall 13 = FTE 7375, Fall 18 FTE = 8494).

For compensation, the amounts of payments have increased over this period, which would be expected with the increase in the number of faculty and the number of students. In addition, there have been changes in the language for the preferred or required method of compensation for program coordinators. For example, in 1999 release time was not permitted unless there were special circumstances (i.e. Social Work accreditation requirements). Release time was also discouraged in 2004 and 2008. By 2012, the agreement calls for a stipend or overload based on the coordinator's preference, with the administration able to require overload payment for exceptional circumstances. Faculty preference for type of payment was preserved in the current agreement as well.

The responsibilities of the Coordinator were clearly designated by 1999 and similar responsibilities were listed in the 2004-2007 Successor Letter of agreement. By 2004, and also in 2008, the responsibilities were organized into sub-sections including:

(1) Creation, Development and Maintenance of Program
(2) Students
(3) Faculty
(4) Liaison
(5) Record Keeping and Reporting Requirements

By 2012, the same sub-sections were listed, with the notable additions to "Coordinate faculty definitions of student learning outcomes appropriate to program mission and the discipline, creation and maintenance of ongoing assessment program" and a requirement to consult with the Dean over the summer about plans for the upcoming year.

In the current agreement, the sub-sections are not used, but the responsibilities listed all appear in the 2012 agreement. One exception is the addition that coordinators should "in situations in which it appears that an individual faculty member has not or will not meet their obligations in a timely manner, the Program Coordinator will advise the Dean appropriately."