

**By-Laws**  
**Department of English and Journalism**  
**Western Illinois University**  
**November 2010**

**Section 1. Function of the Department**

The Department's purpose is to fulfill the following duties:

- A. Support student reading and writing throughout the university;
- B. Contribute to the general education of all students;
- C. Provide practical and theoretical instruction in all majors and minors in the Department of English and Journalism;
- D. Provide instruction in graduate courses leading to the Master of Arts in English;
- E. Provide faculty, graduate assistant, and staff support to the University Writing Center;
- F. Provide students with the working knowledges and skill sets that will allow them to pursue careers in such fields as journalism, law and other discourse or public-policy-oriented endeavors; emerging green industries; social service and health industries; secondary or post-secondary education; and other emerging, new economy sectors;
- G. Prepare students for graduate work in English studies;
- H. Support student development through such student-run publications as *Elements*, *Western Voices*, and *The Western Courier*;
- I. Add to critical and theoretical knowledge in English Studies and Journalism through research by departmental faculty members;
- J. Provide creative writing through the work and research of departmental faculty members;
- K. Fulfill university and community service roles as demands arise and resources allow.

**Section 2. Outline of Faculty Governance**

The main governing body of the department is the Unit A and Unit B faculty coming together as a Meeting of the Whole. Meetings of the Whole are regularly scheduled seven times per year—in August, September, October, November, February, March, and April. Serving the Meeting of the Whole, screening its business in accordance with the terms of these by-laws, preparing its agendas, and running its meetings is the Executive Committee.

Standing and ad hoc committees and the area groups complete the faculty governance structure and send business to the Meeting of the Whole via the Executive Committee.

### **Section 3. Duties and Responsibilities of the Chair and Program Directors**

The Department is managed by a Chairperson appointed by the central administration of the University upon recommendation of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Chair is responsible to the Department and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for the successful management of the Department.

The Chair should provide leadership for the Department and should assist in achieving the objectives of the Department, College, and the University. The Chair should maintain good public relations both within and outside the Department. The Chair should encourage members of the faculty to assume a full share in the work of the Department and should try to make the best use of their experience, preparation, and abilities.

The Chair should be committed to shared governance, but must on occasion make decisions that may not meet with the general approval of the faculty. **The Chair will provide written explanations for all such decisions. These explanations may be distributed to the entire faculty via email or in a paper memo. They must be provided to the faculty within 48 hours of the particular decision unless circumstances require delay. If such circumstances are in play, then the Chair must provide explanations for such decisions within one month of the event.**

The Chair is not a voting member of the faculty. The Chair cannot serve as a voting member of a departmental committee.

In addition to these duties, as documented in the Official University Policy Manual (<http://wiu.edu/policies/deptchairs.php>) the Chair shall be responsible for the execution of University and college policies insofar as they concern the department. More specifically, the Chair shall be responsible, with the counsel and advice of the faculty, either directly or through committees, for the following:

- Overseeing and reviewing long-range departmental goals and objectives;
- Recruiting new faculty and non-academic personnel;
- Evaluating departmental members for retention or non-renewal of appointment;
- Recommending tenure and promotion;
- Preparing and administering the departmental budget;
- Preparing schedules of courses and class assignments of departmental faculty (this is done in collaboration and consultation with the English Committee, the Graduate Committee, the Writing Committee, the Journalism Committee, and the department area groups);
- Supervising the development of department curriculum;
- Encouraging faculty members in the department to improve themselves professionally through study, research, and participation in professional organizations;
- Furnishing leadership for evaluation and improvement of instruction and academic advisement in the department;

- Serving as a review officer with regard to student grievances;
- Classroom teaching as appropriate and all other matters which affect the general welfare of the department;
- Convening departmental meetings on a regular basis, but not less than once each semester.

The Chair is also responsible for the following duties:

- With the appropriate program directors, advisors, and coordinators, authorizes graduate student teaching contracts and hires and supervises work-study and undergraduate student help;
- Aids in the supervision of Civil Service personnel;
- If needed, appoints non-elected faculty members to committees and other service assignments; if needed, appoints committee chairs in consultation with respective committees;
- In consultation and collaboration with the Executive Committee, establishes ad-hoc committees when needed;
- Assigns office space and other physical facilities and approves changes in equipment, remodeling, furniture, etc.

In the Chair's absence, the Director of Writing will fulfill the duties of the Department Chair.

The Program Directors are appointed by the Chair in consultation with the Executive Committee. Each appointment will be for a four-year term and should be rotated through qualified, available, and interested faculty. If such rotation is not possible, then the four-year term is renewable. At the end of each academic year the Chair will provide all program directors with a written evaluation of their performance. This evaluation will be based on the designated duties of each program director (see appendices A-E). The chair may make interim appointments when circumstances warrant such an action.

In consultation with the Executive Committee, the Chair can remove a faculty member from a directorship position if the faculty member's performance in that position requires that the Chair take such action.

## **Section 4. General Policies and Procedures**

### **A. Meetings of the Whole**

**4.A.1** Meetings of the whole will be scheduled as needed. At minimum, these meetings will be scheduled seven times per year—August, September, October, November, February, March, and April. Faculty are expected to make every effort to attend all meetings (see Article 18.15 of the UPI contract) and should avoid scheduling other appointments at regular faculty meeting times. These times will be established at the beginning of each term;

**4.A.2** A member of the Executive Committee is appointed as meeting secretary to take minutes and distribute prior minutes to faculty for an approval/non-approval vote;

**4.A.3** Minutes of all departmental meetings will be made available to faculty;

**4.A.4** Voting faculty are those who are tenured, on tenure track, full time Unit B instructors, and Temporary Unit A faculty in service for more than one year;

**4.A.5** Members on leave may attend meetings and may vote.

## **B. Hiring Procedures**

Nothing in the following procedures shall be construed as contravening the policies and procedures in the University's Hiring Guidelines Manual or the College of Arts & Sciences Policies Manual.

Tenured and tenure-track department faculty serve as the HRC. On Unit B faculty searches, at least one Unit B faculty member will serve on the committee. All committee appointments are made by the Chair in consultation with the Hiring and Retention Committee and must be reviewed by Executive Committee.

In a faculty search, the Hiring and Retention Committee will do the following:

**4.B.1.** Consult with the Chair of the department and the affected area directors or faculty on the need for new faculty positions and those positions' specialties;

**4.B.2** In consultation with U-EOA, write the ad and then advertise the position in the appropriate venues and in the appropriate timeline;

**4.B.3** Confirm that the Department Chair takes the Search Committee's recommendations along with the Chairs' recommendation to the CAS Dean for a recommendation of hiring approval.

**4.B.4** Maintain strict confidentiality throughout this process.

In a search, the Search Committee will do the following:

**4.B.5** Set due dates for applications and collect required credentials from applicants;

**4.B.6.** Recommend to the Chair which candidates should be invited for an initial interview;

**4.B.7.** Conduct initial interviews at the appropriate venue or through other appropriate means;

**4.B.8.** In consultation with the Hiring and Retention Committee and the Chair, see that arrangements are made for the visit of finalist candidates (this includes timely and adequate publicity, encouragement of attendance, a commitment to inclusion, visits with faculty members, an interview schedule, etc.);

**4.B.9.** Screen all candidates (by means of their credentials) at an appropriate time and make credentials available to all members of the faculty upon request;

**4.B.10.** Obtain comments from faculty members concerning credentials in writing;

**4.B.11** Provide HRC with *written* comments from Search Committee members after all of the candidate's visits;

**4.B.12** Meet with the Department Chair and the Hiring and Retention Committee to discuss their recommendation with regard to whether or not a candidate should be offered a contract;

#### ***Civil Service Positions***

**4.B.14** University Civil Service guidelines will be followed (See [http://www.sucss.state.il.us/sar\\_results.asp](http://www.sucss.state.il.us/sar_results.asp).)

**4.B.15** The Chair shall consult a majority of Ex Co members.

#### ***Temporary Faculty Positions***

**4.B.16** University Equal Opportunity and Access guidelines will be followed.

**4.B.17** There will be a minimum of three members on a Temporary Search Committee. In consultation with HRC and ExCo, the chair will invite faculty to serve on a voluntary basis.

#### **C. Allocation of Travel Funds and Travel Approval**

With approval of the Chair, travel funds to attend professional meetings will be allocated by the Travel Coordinator according to a formula approved by the Meeting of the Whole. See Item 7.14 of these By-laws for a full description of this process.

#### **D. Office Hours**

Collective Bargaining regulations will be followed as per UPI/WIU Agreement Article 18.15. To this effect, all full-time faculty members must hold 4 scheduled office hours spread over 3 days per week.

### **E. Commencement Participation**

Faculty participation in graduation ceremonies will be determined by a rotation system administered by the Chair. Assigned faculty are responsible for finding a substitute in the event they cannot attend. Faculty attending commencement outside the rotation should notify the chair who will revise the rotation accordingly.

### **F. Departmental Responsibilities**

#### *Committees*

Standing committees and their functions are listed below. Committee assignments are determined by election and are based on faculty willingness to serve and also a reasonable distribution among major areas in the Department. A staggered appointment system is followed which provides for member rotation.

Recommendations from a committee, or the staff as a whole, should not be overridden by the Chair unless:

- 4.F.1.** The recommendations are not in accord with University or the Board of Trustees policies;
- 4.F.2.** The Chair cannot, for reasons stated, accept the recommendations.

If there is insufficient time for committee action, e.g., in cases of emergency when it is necessary to take quick action, the Chair may make a decision without the usual committee recommendation. In such cases, the appropriate committee should be consulted if at all possible.

#### *Executive Committee*

The following are the specific duties of the Executive Committee.

At least one Executive Committee meeting is held in preparation for each Meeting of the Whole.

Executive Committee meetings are open to all.

The Executive Committee sets the dates for regular Meetings of the Whole. It cancels these meetings for lack of business. It calls special Meetings of the Whole when the need arises.

The Executive Committee publishes an agenda for each Meeting of the Whole in advance. When the Executive Committee calls a special Meeting of the Whole, it provides the department faculty with as much notice as possible and the special reasons for the meeting.

Business to be sent by the Executive Committee to the Meeting of the Whole includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) curricular matters, other than simple changes in course title, prerequisite or description, or minor modifications of a program;
- (2) long-range planning;
- (3) changes in committee rules;
- (4) policy matters;
- (5) general welfare of the department.

In addition the Executive Committee sits with the Chair at least once per semester to review the department's budget and budget plans.

Standing and ad hoc committees supply action minutes of their meetings to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee posts these minutes electronically or physically for the whole faculty.

The quorum for Executive Committee meetings is four of the five members. The Executive Committee acts only on a majority vote of its members, a vote of three.

A majority is required for a Meeting of the Whole. Meeting agenda items are settled in the Meeting of the Whole by a majority vote of those present. Other matters discussed in the Meeting of the Whole and requiring a vote are sent to the faculty for a ballot vote. In a ballot vote measures carry by a majority of those voting, except that changes to the by-laws require a majority vote of the whole faculty.

Ad hoc committees may be created either by the Executive Committee or by the Chair.

Any faculty member or the department chair may ask the Executive Committee to place an item of business before the Meeting of the Whole. This may be an item that has not arisen through a standing or ad hoc committee but fits the above definition of business appropriate for the Meeting of the Whole.

## **Section 5. Elections**

Elections for all departmental committees occur in spring. Special elections occur as needed.

## **Section 6. Amending the By-Laws**

These by-laws may be amended when the amendment is approved by a majority of the faculty. A proposed amendment must be presented at a Meeting of the Whole, either a regularly scheduled meeting or one specially scheduled for the purpose by the Executive Committee. Normally, a proposed amendment reaches the Executive Committee from a standing or ad hoc committee. After discussion in the Meeting of the Whole, the proposed amendment is submitted to the faculty for a ballot vote. Upon approval by the Chair, the amendment becomes part of the by-laws.

## Section 7. Standing committees and coordinators

Department committees and coordinators work with the Chair, faculty, staff, and students to perform the business of the department, as specified below.

Unless otherwise noted:

- All committees and coordinators develop their own working policies and procedures, in congruence with these bylaws, and subject to the approval of the Meeting of the Whole;
- Standing committees and coordinators may be assisted by each other, by coordinators, or by ad hoc committees as needed;
- When appropriate, standing committees and coordinators consult with the Chair, the Executive Committee, the Meeting of the Whole, students, and/or staff;
- Standing committees and coordinators should notify department faculty on College and University committees, such as CAS Faculty Council, Faculty Senate, and University Graduate Council when departmental business is moving through those committees;
- All committees and coordinators regularly deliver action minutes or activity notes, with relevant supporting materials, to the Chair and/or the Executive Committee. These materials will be published on the department's private web site;
- All committees elect a chair;
- All ex officio committee members, except for the Chair, have voting rights;
- All committee members and coordinators may serve successive terms if re-elected;
- Regular terms of office are three (3) years, and all committee and coordinator seats are open to both Unit A and Unit B **except where specifically excluded**;
- No one may be elected to more than two standing committees;
- No elected coordinator may be elected to more than one standing committee;
- No one receiving ACEs for administrative duties may serve as an elected coordinator.

### 7.1: Academic integrity and grade appeals committee

The academic integrity and grade appeals committee acts in accordance with the University Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php> and <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/gradeapp.php>).

#### **7.1.1: Academic integrity and grade appeals membership**

Four total members:

- Three elected faculty, from either Unit A or Unit B, elected by the department;
- One student appointed by the Chair in consultation with the committee, serving a one-year term;
- The Chair, *ex officio*.

A committee chair will be annually elected by the committee from its faculty members. She or he shall serve as a non-voting member of the committee. The Chair should be a continuing member of the committee.

If, in order to meet the impartiality or membership requirements of the University policies, the committee requires replacement faculty members or students for a specific case, they shall be appointed by the department chair in consultation with the committee.

## **7.2: Assessment coordinator**

The assessment coordinator works with all areas of the department to develop and implement policies, procedures, and strategies related to assessment of student learning. The assessment coordinator does not evaluate student work and is not responsible for performing assessments. Rather, she or he assists standing committees, works with relevant College and University personnel regarding assessment, and advises the department chair and executive committee when appropriate.

### **7.2.1: Assessment coordinator elections**

The assessment coordinator is elected by the department. Unit A or Unit B faculty may serve.

## **7.3: Associate faculty committee**

The associate faculty committee reviews and makes recommendations regarding issues of associate faculty welfare.

### **7.3.1: Associate faculty membership**

All permanent associate (Unit B) may serve as members of this committee.

### **7.3.2: Associate faculty executive board**

Members of the associate faculty committee annually elect a three person executive board (a chair, vice chair, and secretary). Each year, one member is elected for a two year term, and one is elected for a one year term. In addition, if there are more than two vacancies on the board, a third member is elected for a one year term. Once elected, the members of the executive board determine who will serve as chair, vice chair, and secretary for that year.

## **7.4: Department personnel committee**

The Department Personnel Committee (DPC) is an autonomous committee established by and operating in accordance with the WIU-UPI Agreement (<http://wiu.edu/provost/upiagreement/>) and the Department Criteria for Unit A Faculty.

The DPC is not subject to the authority of the meeting of the whole. They develop their own working policies and procedures. They do not submit an annual report to the department. However, the DPC may request time in faculty meetings when necessary, and may ask the Elections Coordinator to administer elections on behalf of the DPC.

### **7.4.1: Department personnel committee membership**

Membership policies for the Department Personnel Committee are established in the Department Criteria for Unit A Faculty, in accordance with the WIU-UPI Agreement.

## **7.5: Elections coordinator**

The elections coordinator works with the Executive Committee and all areas of the department to administer departmental elections and referendums, including annual departmental elections, votes on tenure and promotion criteria requested by the Department Personnel Committee, and annual establishment of the associate faculty executive board.

In consultation with committees, the elections coordinator can reduce the length of terms for newly elected committee members prior to their election, to ensure membership terms are staggered.

### **7.5.1: Elections coordinator elections**

The elections coordinator is elected by the department. Unit A or Unit B faculty may serve.

## **7.6: English committee**

The committee has four primary duties:

First, the committee is responsible for scheduling courses for the English major and minor. This charge involves convening meetings of the literature faculty to draft the schedule and reviewing the schedule with the academic advisor before submitting it to the department chair.

Second, the committee considers and facilitates all program and course changes to the English major and minor. To fulfill this charge, the committee reviews proposals for curricular change, marshals support for proposed changes from the department chair and faculty, and represents the proposed changes before necessary committees, such as the CAS Curriculum Committee, Faculty Council, CCPI, and Faculty Senate.

Third, the committee is responsible for assessing the English major and minors. This charge involves working with the Assessment Coordinator to alert appropriate faculty members about assessment procedures, to conduct the assessment (marshaling support from faculty members if needed), and to draft a report that can be used to inform curricular changes.

Finally, the committee reviews program and course changes for creative writing, English education, and professional writing, advising area groups and the department chair as needed.

### **7.6.1: English committee membership**

The English committee is three (3) Unit A faculty members, elected by the department.

## **7.7: Executive committee**

The duties of the executive committee are described in Sections 2 and 4F of the By-laws.

### **7.7.1: Executive committee membership**

The executive committee is elected by the department. It has six total members:

- one faculty member elected from Unit A;
- one faculty member elected from Unit B;
- three faculty members elected from Unit A or Unit B;

- the department chair, *ex officio* and non-voting.

## **7.8: Graduate committee**

The graduate committee administers the graduate program and advises the department chair on scheduling and other matters.

The graduate committee recommends and approves changes to the graduate curriculum or course offerings.

The graduate committee recommends appointments to the graduate faculty.

The student committee member does not attend meetings or portions of meetings when the graduate committee is discussing confidential information involving graduate students.

### **7.8.1 Graduate committee membership**

The graduate committee has five total members:

- three members of the graduate faculty, elected by the graduate faculty;
- one student representative, elected by the English Graduate Organization for a one-year term;
- the Director of Graduate Studies, *ex officio*.

## **7.9: Hiring & retention committee**

The hiring and retention committee has two core functions: (1) providing oversight and coordinating departmental strategy in hiring and (2) supporting faculty retention and professional development.

The committee makes recommendations to the Chair regarding program and faculty diversity needs that can be met through hiring. The principle method for this work is the development of a departmental hiring strategy, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Meeting of the Whole.

The hiring and retention committee also offers continuity in department personnel matters by being a resource for the department, particularly faculty search committees. To this end, HRC maintains electronic files of useful best practices, forms, and guidelines.

The committee also assists both the Chair and search committees with faculty searches by publicizing openings, helping search committees make candidates available to the department, meeting with candidates invited to campus for interviews, and administering, reviewing, and evaluating faculty response forms. The committee submits recommendations regarding candidates to the department chair. These recommendations should be given significant consideration.

Finally, the committee aids the department's retention efforts by mentoring faculty. Their role is in no way evaluative. Rather, they help the department develop events and programs generally beneficial to faculty, such as colloquium series, formal and informal mentoring programs, assistance in the preparation of application materials for faculty and civil service awards (self-nominated or otherwise), and introduction and orientation.

**7.9.1: Hiring & retention committee membership**

Three faculty from Unit A, elected by the department.

**7.10: Journalism committee**

The Journalism committee advises the Director of Journalism and the department chair regarding assessment, scheduling, recruitment, and other matters relevant to the Journalism program, and serves as a curriculum committee for the Journalism major and minor.

**7.10.1: Journalism committee membership**

All Journalism faculty serve as members of this committee.

**7.11: Publicity & events committee**

The publicity & events committee works with all areas of the department to develop and implement policies, procedures, and strategies related to publicity and events. The committee is not responsible for publicizing department events and news. Rather, they serve to facilitate communication among all areas of the department, help those areas work with relevant College and University units, eliminate scheduling conflicts, and help the department articulate events with student recruitment. In this way, the committee helps foster, diversify, and intensify the intellectual atmosphere of the department and the campus.

The committee has the following specific duties:

- Coordinating the department calendar of events.
- Hosting calendar meetings, in early Fall and Spring, to be attended by the executive committee, standing committee chairs, coordinators, student organization representatives, and faculty responsible for coordinating individual events.
- Organizing and coordinating guest speakers and department events, soliciting nominations for speakers from the department for large events such as the Magliocco Lecture and other established lectures.

**7.11.1: Publicity & events committee membership**

Five total members:

- a. two faculty members, from either Unit A or Unit B, elected by the department;
- b. the recruitment coordinator, *ex officio*;
- c. the chair of the English committee, *ex officio*;
- d. the Director of Journalism, *ex officio*.

**7.12: Recruitment coordinator**

The recruitment coordinator works with all areas of the department to develop and implement policies, procedures, and strategies related to student recruitment. The recruiting coordinator is not responsible for all student recruitment. Rather, he or she assists standing committees, works with relevant College and University personnel regarding recruitment, and advises the department chair and executive committee when appropriate.

Duties include:

- Coordinating the development of strategies which address our two key recruiting goals: (1) recruiting first-year and transfer students to Western to study English or Journalism; (2) encouraging current students to enroll in our courses, majors, and minors;
- Helping standing committees and area groups solicit volunteers to participate in relevant events;
- Working with the department chair, standing committees, and area groups to coordinate recruiting activities, procure funding from outside sources if available, and produce promotional materials;
- Making budget recommendations for recruiting-related expenditures to the executive committee.

#### **7.12.1: Recruitment coordinator elections**

The recruitment coordinator is elected by the department. Unit A or Unit B faculty may serve.

### **7.13: Scholarship coordinator**

The scholarship coordinator, with the support of the department chair and executive committee, coordinates activities related to the awarding of department scholarships, including searches for candidates, presentation of awards, and identification of students whose names can be entered for college and university scholarships and/or awards. The scholarship coordinator collaborates with the department chair to convene *ad hoc* committees to review scholarship and award applications.

The department adviser serves as scholarship coordinator *ex officio*.

### **7.14: Travel coordinator**

The travel coordinator allocates travel funds for the year according to a formula approved by the Meeting of the Whole and the department chair.

The coordinator solicits travel reimbursement requests from faculty in September of each academic year and confirms the travel status (administrative, participant, or attendant) and the appropriate amounts for travel, registration, per diem and lodging of each request.

As soon thereafter as possible, the coordinator reports to the department the proportional funding of requests based on available funds and the approved departmental formula.

In January the coordinator reports to the department the status of encumbered and disbursed funds to date, requests that faculty members submit any additional travel funds requests not considered during the preceding disbursement, and allocates any remaining funds according to the department's formula.

The coordinator also assists the department chair in soliciting travel funds adequate for faculty travel needs.

#### **7.14.1: Travel coordinator elections**

The travel coordinator is elected by the department. Unit A or Unit B faculty may serve.

### **7.15: Writing committee**

The writing committee manages and assesses the first- and second-year writing sequence. The committee also reviews subcommittee reports and recommends texts to be used in those courses, reviews and revises writing course goals and objectives, and reviews and recommends policies and procedures to strengthen the WIU Writing Program. The committee also advises the Director of Writing in appropriate matters.

#### **7.15.1: Writing committee membership**

Five total members:

- a. Three faculty members from Unit B and one from either Unit A or B, elected by the department;
- b. One graduate student, usually a teaching assistant, selected by the committee;
- c. The Director of Writing, *ex officio*;
- d. The Director of the University Writing Center, *ex officio*.

## **Section 8. Area groups**

All faculty who teach in any given area serve together as area groups.

These groups work with standing committees, coordinators, and the department chair regarding matters pertaining to their academic areas, such as assessment, curriculum revision, hosting events, scheduling, and student recruitment.

Standing committees are strongly encouraged to consult with area groups regarding relevant matters of concern.

Faculty may participate in all area groups in which they teach.

Meetings of area groups can be called by the department chair, committees with which they are affiliated, or by any member of the faculty. Minutes are required for these meetings. The chair shall be notified of meetings.

These minutes are to be supplied to Executive Committee and then shared with the rest of the department.

The following groups are established, affiliated with standing committees when indicated.

1. Composition: all faculty who teach first- or second-year writing. Affiliated with the Writing Committee.
2. Creative writing: all faculty who teach creative writing. Affiliated with the English Committee.
3. English Education: all faculty who teach English Education. Affiliated with the English Committee.

4. Graduate: all full members of the graduate faculty. Affiliated with the Graduate Committee.
5. Literature: all faculty who teach drama, film, literature, and/or new media. Affiliated with the English Committee.
6. Professional writing: all faculty who teach upper-division and/or graduate writing. Affiliated with the English and Writing Committees.
7. Journalism: all faculty who teach in Journalism. Affiliated with the Journalism Committee of the Whole

Faculty who teach in other areas of interest are expressly permitted to collaborate regarding those areas, and to bring matters of business to the Meeting of the Whole, even if recognized area groups are not formally established.