Members present: Redican, O’Keefe, Zahm, Hyer, Roberts, Eriksson, Porterfield, Hardcastle, Stephens, Hagen, Welch

Redican called the meeting to order with three items on the agenda: 1) Update on University Council Actions and discussion of comments received on promotion and tenure related issues, 2) Summary of 2005-2006 CFA Actions, 3) 2006-2007 CFA Issues and Planning. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

University Council Actions

Redican explained that the Stop the Clock and Modified Duties resolutions were approved by University Council. The resolution dealing with 2.8.4.2, Promotion and Tenure committees, was withdrawn. Feedback gathered from the Faculty Senate and department heads in some colleges suggested that some prefer to allow the department heads to participate in college-level promotion and tenure committee deliberations. CFA members agreed that department heads could gain a great deal from sitting in and listening at the college-level deliberations, but department heads should not have more than one vote during the promotion and tenure process. A few colleges appear to allow a more active role for department head, by chairing the department level committee, writing a separate letter that becomes part of the dossier, and also voting at the college level. Additional feedback also revealed that some deans chair the college level committee, write a separate letter, or in one case, write the letter for the college committee (not a separate letter). CFA members continued to express concern that these practices could result in the perception, if not the fact of undue influence on the part of the department head and/or dean.

CFA members discussed the pluses and minuses of a college level committee that was completely independent from the department and the need to create procedural consistency across colleges. Establishing the principle that each participant is allowed one vote is an important part of creating that independence and consistency. In addition, the resolution currently states that at least two-thirds of the college level committee must be faculty representatives – this would change the size and balance on those college committees that currently include department heads.

To gather further feedback from faculty members, it was suggested that all tenured and tenure-track faculty be asked to respond to a brief survey on survey.vt.edu in early fall that would ask for their input on five or six basic propositions that would guide the rewriting of the P&T guidelines. These principles could also be sent to college association chairs or faculty senators in colleges that do not have an association to collect definitive feedback. The statement of principles would include a sentence or two about what each is trying to accomplish. It would be ideal to have the survey ready for the first faculty senate meeting in August.
The resolutions addressing the Reconciliation Committee (1.5.1) and Valid Issues for Grievance (2.13.1) were also withdrawn at University Council. Opposition was raised to the listing of valid issues for grievance, including using the grievance process in cases of P&T process problems. One approach is to leave P&T issues as non-grievable, but to expand the definition of what issues might be appealed through the regular P&T process. Another suggestion was to explicitly state that pursuing process violations through the grievance process would not result in the granting of tenure. Some members believe that faculty members pursuing such claims are looking for redress rather than believing that the negative tenure decision would be overturned.

The revisions to section 1.5.1 were viewed as entirely editorial. Since they only make reference to the valid issues for grievance by citing the section of the Faculty Handbook, CFA members felt it appropriate to direct the Provost’s Office to make changes to the Faculty Handbook during the annual summer revision process and not to deal with the changes through resolution format.

Summary of 2005-2006 CFA Actions and Planning Ahead

Redican summarized the accomplishments of the CFA during 2005 -2006, which were considerable: eliminating the quota for research assignments, approval of more flexible policies on modified duties and stop the clock, and significant discussion on issues of faculty evaluation and promotion and tenure, among other things. These latter issues will be carried forward to next year’s agenda.

Two CFA members need to be represented on two university level committees/commissions. Zahm will serve on the Employee Benefits Committee and Hardcastle will serve on the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Recorder, Catherine Amelink