Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
January 26, 2007

Members present: Easterling, Mitchell, Ayoub, Ball, Lener, Brewster, Eriksson, Hyer, Hagen

Guest(s): Carolyn Rude, Professor and Chair (English)

Hardcastle called the meeting to order with five agenda items: 1) Update on P & T resolution, 2) Revision of the scholarly misconduct policy, 3) Discussion of annual evaluation resolution, 4) Discussion of instructor ranks resolution, and 5) Discussion of professors of practice resolution. The agenda and minutes were approved.

UPDATE ON P&T RESOLUTION
The Faculty Senate is still in the process of reviewing the proposed resolution, which had been introduced for first reading at University Council. The most problematic area may be the change allowing associate professors to serve on P&T committees reviewing promotions to full professor. This would be advantageous to smaller departments, allowing more faculty members to be eligible to serve if elected.

REVISION OF THE SCHOLARLY MISCONDUCT POLICY
A committee has been formed to review Virginia Tech’s policy on scholarly misconduct and to make revisions so that it is in compliance with the new federal regulations. The new guidelines are not drastically different; however, the changes may affect our graduate and undergraduate honor systems. All institutions that receive federal funding must observe these regulations. The goal is to make the necessary changes by the end of the semester so the revised guidelines would be in place by next fall.

RESOLUTION CONCERNING ANNUAL EVALUATIONS
Suggestions for the revision of the Annual Evaluation resolution were minor as far as content. Comments were as follows:

- Departments are cautious about including written guidelines concerning standards for tenure, although procedures for the tenure review process should be in writing.

- The term “pre-tenured faculty” will be used to refer to the person (rather than “probationary faculty member”); “probationary” will refer to the period.

Committee members voted unanimously in support of the resolution with the noted revisions.

Hardcastle will distribute the resolution via email for additional comments/feedback. It will then be voted on in Faculty Senate.
INSTRUCTOR CAREER LADDER RESOLUTION
Pat Hyer and Carolyn Rude facilitated the discussion on the proposed instructor ranking system. A meeting in late summer with department heads provided encouragement to proceed, and a meeting in October with instructors provided feedback on a conceptual proposal. There was support for a three instructor ranks: instructor, advanced instructor, and senior instructor, which would provide more appropriate recognition and reward for outstanding performance over a career.

Concerns addressed:
- The statement “commensurate salary adjustment” needs to be clarified – refer to this as “promotion adjustment” instead.
- One-year initial appointments vs. Multi-year: may be important to allow multi-year initial appointments since these now occur in special negotiations. The language should be changed to “normally” or “generally.”
- Since P&T committees will facilitate the process, there are concerns of whether the instructors will be held to the same standards as junior faculty. There was assurance that the process would represent the departments and instructors point of view.
- Instructors must go through the process unsuccessfully twice before they can appeal. Unlike tenure-track faculty, instructors will not be terminated if there promotion is not supported. There is no appeals committee. The provost makes the final decision.
- Hardcastle expressed concerns with the possibility of instructors being terminated within the contract period.
- Written feedback should be given to candidates who are not promoted. This clause should be added into the policy.

PROFESSORS OF PRACTICE
The Professors of Practice rank would allow departments to hire individuals with a professional expertise. It is at the department’s discretion as to whether they would use this rank or not. Hyer explained that the difference between this rank and an adjunct professor is that the latter is employed less than 50%, or for a very short term. “Visiting professor” is also a temporary rank with a six year limit. Professors of Practice would be a non-tenured position; they would be eligible to serve as a principle investigator. The Graduate School would decide on whether these individuals are allowed to work with master and doctoral students.

The committee will forward the resolution, along with the policies on non-tenured faculty, to the Faculty Senate.

ANNOUNCEMENT
The next meeting will be held on February 2nd with the AdvanceVT Policy Work Group.

Recorder: Tracey Cameron, Office of the Provost