Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
March 31, 2006

Members present: Redican, Brewster, Welch, Sanders, Eriksson, Kelly, Stephens, O'Keefe, Hyer, Ball, Hardcastle, Zahm

Guest: Sam Easterling, member of University Council, and past President of Faculty Senate

Redican called the meeting to order with four items on the agenda: 1) Update and discussion on resolutions going before University Council, 2) Update on Committee on Faculty Ethics, 3) Update on Diversity-Related Activities on Faculty Activity Reports, 4) Annual Evaluations. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Resolutions Going Before University Council

Five resolutions, as approved by CFA, are scheduled to go before University Council on April 3. In reading material for that meeting, Sam Easterling, past President of the Faculty Senate, expressed concern about several of the resolutions that were being introduced. Easterling expressed support for resolutions CFA 2005-2006A (Stop the Clock) and CFA 2005-2006B (Modified Duties) as they are currently written with minor editorial changes suggested to resolution B. With regard to CFA 2005-2006C concerning departmental and college P&T committee composition, Easterling expressed concern about the lack of consistency in the way policy guidelines are applied across department, college, and university levels. For example, CFA removed the department heads from college committees, but left the deans on the university-level committee. Also, the deans can attend the college committee deliberations, but department heads cannot. Easterling cautioned against removing the department head’s ability to participate and vote at the college level, as there are several colleges that currently follow this practice and it works well for them.

Another issue raised was the seeming inconsistency between an existing statement suggesting that these are “guidelines” open to variation, yet they read as prescriptions. Easterling thought this should be clarified. If CFA was really looking to have these practices adopted uniformly, then the guideline language should be removed.

CFA members were in agreement that no one should have two votes during the promotion and tenure process and explained that they were looking to create a policy that was prescriptive in nature to ensure better consistency across colleges and departments. CFA had discussed the involvement of department heads on college committees at length, and did not agree with Easterling that they should remain as voting (or non-voting) participants.

Redican agreed to provide additional opportunity for the Faculty Senate to discuss the resolution at their meeting on April 11. He will ask that the University Council to defer
the second reading of the policy. CFA meets again on April 21, so additional comments can be dealt with at that time and revisions made if appropriate, or the resolution can be postponed until fall if issues cannot be resolved.

With regard to resolutions D and E, Easterling asked that resolution D clarify that the Committee on Reconciliation does not stay involved in a case that moves forward with the grievance procedure if reconciliation is not possible. Changes to resolution E were suggested to clarify the role of the Faculty Review Committee, however, CFA members felt that the resolution was sufficiently clear as it is currently written.

Faculty Ethics

Bernice Hausman, chair of the Committee on Faculty Ethics (CFE) joined the previous CFA meeting to highlight changes that the CFE would like to see made to Faculty Handbook sections 1.5.3 and 2.7. Hyer explained that editorial changes as discussed at the previous meeting could be made to section 1.5.3 by authorizing the Provost’s Office to incorporate the changes in the next round of revisions to the Handbook. However, the scholarly misconduct policy (section 2.7) turned out to present larger issues, including how to deal with the growing number of research faculty who do not report through a college dean (the entire policy assumes the college deans will be in charge) and concern about whether deans are the most appropriate administrators to head up sensitive investigations of allegations of scholarly misconduct. The Research Division might be in a better position to manage such investigations. As further discussion is needed surrounding the scholarly misconduct policy, only the editorial changes to section 1.5.3 will be made at this time. CFA members agreed with the editorial changes and authorized the Provost’s Office to make these during summer 2006.

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity Resolution 2005-06A, Reporting Diversity-Related Activities on Faculty Activities Reports

Hyer explained that some feedback was collected by Valerie Hardcastle on the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD) resolution to address the reporting of diversity activities on Faculty Activities Reports (FARs). Comments received highlighted concerns with the appropriateness of reporting and being held accountable for diversity-related activities. CFA concurred that including this on FARs was still important for the reasons highlighted during the last meeting as well as the fact it is already a section of the P&T dossier that faculty members are expected to complete.

Annual Evaluations

Feedback has also been received on the resolution concerning annual evaluations. While some colleges already use an appropriately charged faculty committee to conduct annual evaluations, other colleges leave it to individual department heads. CFA members agreed that a committee would allow junior faculty to receive multiple perspectives and feedback. The policy changes suggested would also allow for greater consistency across departments and colleges and ensure consistency in cases where a department head might
turn over frequently. CFA members also felt the policy should include a statement that written feedback should address teaching, research, and service obligations.

Redican called the meeting to closure due to time constraints. CFA will meet again on April 21, 2006.

Recorder, Catherine Amelink