Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA)
Minutes
November 30, 2007


Guest(s): Tonya Smith-Jackson

Odendaal called the meeting to order with three agenda items: 1) Underrepresented Faculty Report from Focus Group Conversations, 2) Mandatory EAP for Faculty, 3) Policy on Promotion and Continued Appointment Process for Librarians and Extension Personal, and 4) Policy on Principal Investigator (PI) Removal. The agenda and minutes were approved.

 AdvanceVT - UNDERREPRESENTED FACULTY REPORT FROM FOCUS GROUP CONVERSATIONS
Tonya Smith-Jackson reported on findings derived from two focus groups held with faculty of color during Spring 2007. Twenty-two underrepresented faculty (A/P and Instructional) of Hispanic and African descent participated. Five main themes emerged from the conversations:

1) Impact of AdvanceVT:
   - Increased awareness of family & work/life balance policies
   - Increased belief that change would happen; gave hope
   - Men really started to understand their personal biases
   - Some groups still ignored in spite of Advance; “should be called Advancing White Women”
   - Language offensive to single and lesbian/gay faculty – i.e. use of the term “spouse”

2) Proposed Solutions to Enhance AdvanceVT
   - Expand events to include UR faculty
   - Expand focus to address issues specific to UR faculty or other cultures, socioeconomic status, definitions of identity, sexual orientation; issues of class emerged
   - Get input on research before it is conducted (i.e. faculty of color were unaware of AdvanceVT during its initial stage

3) Recruitment Facilitators, Barriers, & Solutions
   - Pipeline – ABD programs; funding a graduate student could lead to future faculty
   - Utilize the external community
   - Benefits/Incentives – educational opportunity to be classified as “faculty”
   - Best practices need to be formalized and sustained
   - Initial placement of spouses is problematic, needs to be addressed
   - Develop a diversity hiring cluster

4) Retention Facilitator, Barriers, & Solutions
What helps retain them here:  Family ties, Department Head, educational benefits, feeling valued, mentoring

Barriers & Solutions:
Community; VT needs to focus on making the community more welcoming for UR faculty
Department heads and leaders need to be culturally competent
Flexible merit models are lacking, definition of merit should be more progressive; collective obligations to the community should be considered for P&T
Lack of trained mentors

5) Open Discussion/Remarks
Need to evolve professionally and be capable of discussing race and racism
Many felt left out and ignored by AdvanceVT
Key organizations were not consulted in the beginning; Black and Hispanic caucuses did not know about AdvanceVT
Many were very grateful for the opportunity to provide input from the UR perspective

Recommendations
- Create an inclusive institutional culture
- Accountability
- Policy review to identify inequities in outcomes and benefits
- Create other opportunities to provide input; especially on committees and commissions. A barrier is VT's extreme underrepresentation which leads to over-taxing of UR Faculty.

A question was raised about diversity clusters. Smith-Jackson explained that this is the idea of having a position announcement around a specific topic area or theme. The hope is that it will attract faculty from a wide variety of disciplines. She added that the Race Task Force defined it as research around diversity issues not typically recognized. Hyer added that diversity clusters are not discriminatory because anyone can apply as long as their research is focused in this area.

Easterling asked whether respondents’ feelings came from a lack of information about the new policies and benefits. Smith Jackson explained that the participants were basing their answers from personal experience; they feel as if they are not getting the same benefits. The policies should be designed so that they are flexible enough to benefit a broad range of people who have varying definitions of family.

Hyer followed up on an earlier comment about UR faculty feeling as if they did not benefit from AdvanceVT. She explained that the NSF grant focused on the Colleges of Science and Engineering, and these colleges had only a very small number of African American women faculty members. She added that the policies ARE flexible (except for state health insurance) and do allow a broad definition of family.

Odendaal commented on the advantage of having cultural competence workshops for department heads. Smith-Jackson explained that the term cultural competence has been
used in university settings for about 15 years (started at the University of San Diego). She added that people want to be “competent” in everything; this term is more attractive and easier for department heads to buy into. Finney added that there are other ways to expose individuals to the topic even if workshops are not feasible. He also added that interventions are going to come from smaller groups; workshops can focus on what is cultural competence and what are you doing to make your department more open. Hyer explained that there is a greater interest on the part of the department heads and others and that VT has made progress in this area over the past four years. For those who are not interested in attending workshops because they are so entrenched in the old way of doing things, Smith-Jackson explained that we will have to wait until there is turnover in order to make progress.

MANDATORY EAP FOR FACULTY
No update

POLICY ON PROMOTION AND CONTINUED APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR LIBRARIANS AND EXTENSION PERSONAL
Lener and Hyer presented recommendations developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion and Continued Appointment for librarians and extension agents. Lener explained that the number of individuals that this policy effects is relatively small (36). The promotion and continued appointment process is similar to tenure; however, the focus is more on service. The committee proposed six recommendations:

1) Change in the composition of the promotion and continued appointment committee which eliminates representation from outreach faculty.
2) One person/one vote: The committee agreed to eliminate the possibility of individuals serving at multiple levels the opportunity to have more than one vote.
3) External Peer Reviews: At least two of the reviewers have to be external from the university.
4) Pre-Continued Appointment Reviews: The handbook should explicitly state that reviews will occur at the two and four year period.
5) The committee proposed that the selection process for committee representatives remain the same.
6) The committee recommended that the promotion and continued appointment deliberation process mirror the university promotion and tenure committee’s deliberation process.

Klein asked how the role of librarians and extension agents differ from other professional faculty (i.e. student services). Lener explained that these individuals have similar expectations as tenured professors with respect to publications and service; the process for continued appointment and promotion used to be the same as tenure. But, all institutions do not have this type of process for librarians and extension agents. Hyer explained that historically, the purpose of this process was to assure academic freedom.

Hyer asked for a motion to approve the resolution. The resolution was unanimously approved.
POLICY ON PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) REMOVAL
Odendaal reported on feedback received from the Senate meeting regarding the PI Removal policy. He explained that the senators felt that there needed to be a more clear definition or reason for removal and that the sponsor needed to be more central to the process (i.e. removal should not happen without the sponsors’ approval). Welch agreed and explained that the language should state that the sponsor initiates removal. Others disagreed, given that the institution has an obligation to assure compliance with required policies and procedures and the sponsor may not be aware of infractions or refusal to comply. The fact that contracts are between the sponsor and the university is actually a protection for faculty members. Most sponsors require approval of the PI, hence, proposing a replacement PI would necessarily involve informing and consulting the sponsor.

Another issue discussed was whether performance issues or ineffectiveness warrant the removal of a PI since ineffectiveness may be difficult to define. This phrase was removed.

Welch recommended the addition of a preamble that discusses the relationship between the university and the sponsor; the document could then move on to list infractions that would constitute removal.

Odendaal reported that the document would be revised and then taken back to senate for their review.

Recorder: Tracey Cameron, Office of the Provost