Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
October 28, 2005

Members present: Redican, Eriksson, Hagen, Brewster, Kelly, Ball, Hyer, Hardcastle, McNamee, Zahm, Stephens.

Guests: Susan Willis-Walton, Co-Director, Center for Survey Research; Ellen Plummer, Director, Women’s Center and representative from the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity; and Peggy Layne, AdvanceVT Project Director.

Redican called the meeting to order with three items on the agenda: 1) Exit Survey Data, 2) Draft revision of Faculty Handbook Section 2.9.1, 3) Continuing Discussion of Promotion and Tenure Issues. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Exit Survey Data
Susan Willis-Walton provided a detailed presentation on results of the Faculty Staff Exit Survey. An executive summary of the findings from the 2004 and 2005 administration of the Exit Survey as it pertains to faculty can be found on the Provost’s website: http://www.provost.vt.edu/web_pages/Worklife_Documents.html. The executive summary captures much of the detail provided by Willis-Walton’s presentation.

Willis-Walton explained that the exit survey findings parallel results from the AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey conducted in spring 2005. Significant differences between administrative/professional faculty, research faculty, and tenured and tenure-track faculty on individual survey items were highlighted. Differences within and across faculty type in regard to gender and race were also mentioned. Themes in the survey data as it pertains to responses about job separation circumstances, factors influencing decisions to leave, confidence in university leadership, morale and motivation, communication and opportunities for input, and perception of treatment university-wide were presented. Negative perceptions in regard to salary were pervasive across faculty type. Departmental climate was highlighted through items that asked about perceptions of support, departmental leadership, and relationships with colleagues. Significant differences in perceptions relative to departmental climate were seen between males and females with males reporting more positive experiences. Other items asked about resources, workload and work-life balance, job security, and recognition, promotion, and compensation. CFA members felt the data collected through the Exit Surveys to date would be useful for benchmarking purposes.

Faculty Handbook Section 2.9.1
CFA members reviewed a draft revision of the first paragraph of Section 2.9.1 of the Faculty Handbook. After reviewing the draft, several changes were suggested in order to clarify the role of the department head and dean in requiring annual evaluations be done in writing. Members also mentioned it would be useful to include a statement reflecting the role of the personnel committee in fashioning recommendations when appropriate.
The revised draft with the suggested changes incorporated will be circulated prior to the December 2nd CFA meeting.

Discussion of Promotion and Tenure Issues

Revisiting an issue introduced at the last meeting, Provost McNamee suggested allowing deans to defer their vote on P&T cases on which they have decidedly mixed views, allowing the case to come forward to the university-level committee along with all other cases rather than giving it a negative vote and forcing the faculty member through a formal appeal. McNamee explained that he felt appeals should be confined to questions of process and not revisiting the merits of a dossier. By deferring their vote, the dean could seek the advice and review of the university-level committee with full consideration of the merits of the case. After some discussion, CFA members felt there was some merit to the suggestion; however, there were also problems. For example, what do the deans say to candidates about how their case is being handled, and under what conditions is it being forwarded to the university committee? Also, sending it forward in this fashion precludes the faculty member from making their own case in person upon appeal. And they would not have access to an actual appeal, possible leading to grievances that would be difficult to resolve.

Recorder, C. Amelink, Office of the Provost