Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA)  
Minutes  
February 15, 2008

Members present: H. Odendaal, P. Hyer (teleconference), E. Lener, K. Eriksson, J. Finney (for Chang), D. Welch, B. Klein, D. Kniola, S. Anong, S. Easterling, K. Hunnings (for Sorensen)

Odendaal called the meeting to order with three agenda items: 1) Policy on Principal Investigator (PI) Removal, 2) Reduced Teaching Load for Pre-Tenure Faculty, and 3) Restriction on Awarding of Degrees at VT for Assistant Professors. The agenda was approved

POLICY ON PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) REMOVAL
Carol Roberson, Special Assistant for Research Contract Affairs, proposed several changes/edits to the PI removal policy. Odendaal presented two of these suggestions and solicited feedback from the group. The first suggestion was use of key personnel and lead investigator instead of principal investigator; the second, inclusion of a suspension statement. These proposed suggestions brought into question the role/expectations of the lead. Odendaal explained that unless the lead investigator is the person subject to removal, then every action for other project personnel should go through that PI.

The committee agreed that use of the term key personnel may be too encompassing for the purposes of this policy. For example a post-doc could have been named in the proposal as key personnel but a sponsor is unlikely to know about the ineffectiveness of a post-doc. It should be the responsibility of the PI to do removal of other key personnel.

Roberson’s suggestions also included the possibility of an immediate suspension of PI authority, while the current draft made that suggestion at the stage of appeal to the Provost. A discussion ensued about whether temporary suspension could or should require the program manager’s consent. Easterling and Finney added that we do not want to include approval or permission from the sponsor, but rather notification. Sponsors have the opportunity and responsibility to decide whether to continue the project under new leadership or whether to terminate the funding agreement. Hyer also asked about immediate suspension in instances where there are allegations of misuse of funds. Members felt that other policies might be used to address this issue.

Odendaal maintained that the policy should state that if suspension or removal ensues, the substitute should be another faculty member in the department, but not an administrator or department head. Others disagreed, stating that the policy should not identify any particular type of substitute since this needs to be negotiated with the sponsor. Easterling suggested a statement in which the university and agency would consult with each other in naming a new PI.
Additional revisions were recommended (i.e. time periods for the provost and president to respond; exclusion of any language that suggested a second appeal) along with changes to grammatical and syntax errors.

The group agreed to adopt *lead investigator* language but not to include *key personnel*. Substantive changes included notification to the program manager and the reassignment of duties clause. Easterling asked that the revised policy be distributed to the group before it is sent back to Faculty Senate.

**REDUCED TEACHING LOAD FOR PRE-TENURE FACULTY**

Hyer presented a draft resolution on pre-tenure teaching release. The resolution states that, at a minimum, pre-tenure faculty would receive at least one semester of full or partial teaching release during the probationary period. When this release occurs is not prescribed in the document because this may vary by department.

Hunnings explained that the reduction in teaching load exacerbates the sense of excess resources bestowed on new assistant professors in business as salary and other perks have escalated to extraordinary levels, vastly exceeding the salaries of senior faculty in the college. The addition of a teaching reduction may cause resentment for seasoned faculty who would have to take over their course loads. Welch stated that although pre-tenure faculty in the college may make more money, these individuals also have higher expectations for scholarship. Hunnings also explained that the college would also have a hard time finding competent instructors to take up the additional work load. The College of Business supports new faculty by offering summer grants to assist in research efforts. Hunnings asked that the policy be inclusive of these types of incentives as well. Others argued that summer time for research is not the same or as valuable as time during the semester. Other colleges also offer summer research funds as part of their start-up packages.

Finney suggested that the Council of Deans discuss the implications of this policy so that all colleges benefit. Klein stated that he was unaware of release time in Veterinary Medicine. He stated that because it is a professional school, their issues are more complex. Hyer will ask McNamee to facilitate this discussion at the Council of Deans meeting on February 20.

**RESTRICTION ON AWARDING OF DEGREES AT VT FOR ASSISTANT PROFESSORS**

The Commission reviewed a request to waive the policy, per provisions in the Faculty Handbook, that precludes instructional faculty at the rank of assistant professor or above from obtaining a degree from VT. The waiver was approved (ten voted in favor; one abstention).

Odendaal asked if the policy should be revised to specify that a faculty member cannot receive a degree from *her/his own department*. Members of the Commission felt that the policy was not excessively burdensome, and it was worth discussing the individual rare case that arises. Finney added that he is not sure that we want to encourage tenure-track
faculty to pursue degrees at Tech after they have been appointed, but there may be instances where an advanced degree may be advantageous and assist the faculty in her/his current role.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Electronic Faculty Activity Reporting demo will be held during the March 14th meeting, 1:30-3:30pm (Alumni Hall in the Inn).

Recorder: Tracey Cameron, Office of the Provost