

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
February 6, 2015

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas, Rami Dalloul (Chair), Velva Groover, Jack Finney, Brad Klein, Wat Hopkins, Rodney Irvin, Chad Lavin, Drew Muscente, Wornie Reed, and James Spotila.

1. Announcement to approve and post the minutes from the November 7, 2014 October 24 meeting. Those minutes have been posted on the CFA Scholar site.

Minutes were approved.

2. Self-plagiarism: Update from COR and CFA representatives meeting on current proposal for the Research Policy 13020 and the Faculty Handbook.

Finney and Dalloul explained that the self-plagiarism policy could only be addressed in the Faculty Handbook and not within the university research misconduct policies. Changing university policies on research misconduct would require federal approval, which the Research Integrity Officer hoped to avoid. Instead, the Commission on Research (COR) added a statement referring readers to the Faculty Handbook for the self-plagiarism policy (chapter 10, section 2). Dalloul will work with the Research Integrity Office on the language of this statement.

CFA reviewed chapters one, two and ten in the Faculty Handbook and made necessary changes to include self-plagiarism into these sections. No changes were made to chapter one. CFA approved the following changes to chapter two, section 2.7 in the last sentence of the first paragraph:

At Virginia Tech, self-plagiarism is considered unethical behavior. Self-plagiarism occurs when an author presents substantial parts of his or her own published work as new without providing appropriate references to the previous work.

CFA also approved the following changes to chapter ten, section 10.0 in the second sentence of the second paragraph:

Ethical misconduct of faculty is covered in chapter two, "Professional Responsibilities and Conduct," which describes the principles of ethical behavior including self-plagiarism.

COR has already drafted a resolution for changing the self-plagiarism in the Faculty Handbook. Dalloul will contact COR because they will need to review and approve changes before having the Faculty Senate review it for feedback. If necessary, CFA will ask COR to have this review rescheduled for March or April instead of later this month. Dalloul will also contact Bernice Hausman about the matter.

3. Grievance process for tenure-track and tenured faculty.

CFA began to discuss the benefits of changing the grievance process by convening a faculty panel sooner (see Faculty Handbook, chapter seven, section 7.7.1). Currently there are three steps before a faculty panel is convened to determine if a claim is grievable. It would make more sense to make the grievance process shorter and timelier for faculty. In order to determine how to shorten the grievance process, CFA has asked for Finney to create a flow chart of the current grievance process. Finney will present this chart at the next CFA meeting.

4. Review of topics for Spring 2015.

Dalloul outlined that the agenda items for spring 2015. These items will include the following items:

- a. Self-plagiarism: better define what constitutes self-plagiarism in research and publications
- b. Faculty grievance process: consider a process change for convening a faculty panel to rule on validity of the issue for a grievance
- c. Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine – Acquisition and faculty status
- d. Faculty Senate

5. Reports from CFA representatives on other commissions and committees.

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity Report

Klein reported that there was concern expressed from the Commission of Graduate Studies and Policies that having a married couple (1 graduate student and 1 faculty member) on the graduate committee may be a problem due to block voting and/or overall conflict of interest. CFA will invite Hans Robinson, chair of the Commission of Graduate Studies and Policies, to the next CFA meeting (if possible) to learn more about this issue.

Employee Benefits Committee Report

Klein explained that there is concern about the types of positions the university is growing. CFA was unsure what these type of positions were. Finney speculated that the concern may be that it is the 72.5% positions (without benefits) that are growing. It was also reported that the university is looking at tuition remission for families of university employees. Using foundation money rather than state money to support funding this benefit may help achieve this change.

6. Other

a. Replacing Scholar

Finney announced that the university is looking to switch from Scholar to another platform. On March 6th Scott Midkiff (Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer) and Dale Pike (Executive Director of the Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies department) will be at CFA's meeting to discuss software alternatives.

b. Anti-plagiarism software

Abbas explained that he has further researched anti-plagiarism software and found that there are no free software options other than Turnitin (which has been discussed in previous CFA minutes). Abbas explained the university needs resources to finance this in order for the software to be purchased. Finney suggested that CFA members discuss this need with Midkiff and Pike during their March 6th meeting.

c. New faculty retirement option

Finney announced that the university is currently designing a new phased retirement option for faculty. The university is using models from George Mason and James Madison University. This new retirement option would allow faculty members to retire but work part-time for a limited period and maintaining eligibility for health insurance paid by Virginia Tech. Finney will continue to provide updates to CFA about the development of this retirement option.

d. Dalloul announced that the next CFA meeting will be on Feb 20th.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Recorder, Elsa Camargo