

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
February 19, 2016

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Rodney Irvin, Velva Groover, Wat Hopkins, Ann Zajac, Philip Young, John Ferris, Jack Davis, Deborah Good, Joe Merola

Guests: Ellen Plummer

The Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) meeting was called to order by Montasir Abbas (Chair), who identified the following agenda items:

- a. Further Discussion/Updates about the Collegiate Faculty Proposal
- b. Results of Institutes Survey
- c. Updates about the COR Survey and Activities
- d. Any Other Business

1. Further Discussion/Updates about the Collegiate Faculty Proposal

At this week's Faculty Senate meeting, there was a discussion about the Collegiate Faculty proposal. Faculty members expressed concern about the proposal's implications for tenure at the institution. They suggested putting a cap on the percentage of collegiate faculty members across the university.

In the CFA meeting, there was some discussion about whether the percentages should be set at the college or university-level. Most agreed that it should be set at the university level in order to account for differences by college. Additionally, Vice Provost Finney expressed that this proposal does not signal a desire to erode tenure. A suggestion was made that the university include a statement about its commitment to tenure.

There was a concern about how collegiate faculty members will interact with current non-tenure track instructors. There are fears of job loss among current non-tenure track instructors. However, the university will continue to have instructors and will retain all current faculty classifications at some level. The university does not have a goal for how many faculty members will populate each category. This new classification is a tool for each college to determine how to best meet their goals.

There was a final comment about the need to write adequate job descriptions and protections for the collegiate faculty members in the faculty handbook

2. Results of Institutes Survey

Chair Abbas made a presentation about the preliminary results from the Institutes survey. The survey emerged from conversations with other faculty members last year who had negative experiences with the university's seven institutes. The survey was sent to all faculty senators, who then forwarded it to their departments. The goal was to gain a sense of faculty members' experiences with the institutes on campus and to develop suggestions for improvement. Sixty-three faculty members responded. About 50 of these responses provided sufficient detail. The remaining responses were incomplete and were eliminated. The responses consisted of faculty members' "excellent," "good," "poor," and "unsatisfactory" experiences with the seven institutes.

Overall, responses from the survey indicated mixed experiences with the institutes. Faculty members believed there was an inside circle of people who had access to the institutes. Many faculty members felt excluded. According to Abbas, many faculty members who felt excluded from the institutes did not participate in the survey because they did not want to be identified. Fralin and Carilion were often mentioned as institutes where individuals had excellent experiences. Some of the problems with the institutes as a whole that were identified were top down policies, a business-like approach, and competition among faculty members. There were four recommendations for improvements: 1. Changing institutes' vision towards VT goals; 2. Instituting more inclusive policies; 3. Promoting a faculty-led alternative pathway; and 4. Immersion between institutes and the university.

There was a discussion about the presentation. There was some concern about the representation in the survey. Because so few faculty members completed the survey, do the results provide meaningful suggestions to the institutes?

There was general agreement about a lack of communication between faculty in departments and the institutes. A commission member noted the struggle of including institute faculty members in the governance structure. Governance is reserved for those in a teaching department. This was something that the Commission on Research has studied as well. Both VTTI, Carilion, and Northern Virginia struggle to feel included because of distance.

There was additional discussion surrounding the role of deans and departments and the percentages of appointments for faculty members working in the institutes. On some occasions, faculty members move from an institute to a department. There was a discussion about if there is a change in salary when faculty members move from working in a department to an institute. Vice Provost Finney indicated that some departments have language about salary corrections, while others do not. There are some faculty who have left departments to go to the institutes. There was a question of whether or not tenure carries over when faculty move. However, there is not a large number of faculty moving between the institutes and departments.

The emergence of destination areas may create greater synergy between the institutes and departments. Institute goals will be tied to the university strategic plan. There will be more projects that will be consistent with the goals of departments and the institutes. This will lead to greater collaboration. However, destination areas are department based, not institute-based. They are coordinated by colleges. If a department wants a new faculty member, they must have two existing faculty members who will have 30% devoted to the area. In a survey administered over the winter break to faculty members regarding destination areas, more than 900 faculty members were listed as contributing to destination areas. So it is easy to see possibilities for collaboration. An additional suggestion was raised about creating internal funding to allow faculty members to use equipment at the institutes, particularly the investment institutes.

3. Updates about the COR Survey and Activities

A subcommittee from the Commission on Research (COR) invited members of the CFA to a recent meeting to discuss their survey on faculty research experiences. The COR survey provides a larger picture about faculty research experiences.

The COR's survey identified many faculty needs. One major finding from the survey was that when faculty have a dry period of funding and lose their grad students and resources, and then get a grant, they have to start their research process over. This takes additional time and resources. They are asking if the university could help to bridge this gap. It was mentioned that this is also a problem for faculty members who go into administration, and then want to go back into research roles.

This subcommittee has invited members of CFA to their next meeting as well. They meet on Monday March 14, at 9:00 AM in 301 Burruss Hall. Members of this committee will be invited to a future CFA meeting to present the findings of the survey. The work of the CFA for this will be to ensure that every need identified in the study has a clear follow-up action.

Another need identified on the survey was faculty recognition. The CFA may be able to address this based upon previous conversations about Journal Impact Factors and dossier guidelines. This was an issue that was not fully resolved in previous CFA meetings. This item will added to the agenda for the next meeting.

4. Any Other Business

- a) There was a question about the possibility to discuss the eFARS. Digital Measures, the current system, will go away in May. There will be a new systems called Elements next year. Elements interfaces with many programs the library uses. Everything is being imported into Elements.

- b) There was an additional question about Canvas as a collaboration center and if there is additional guidance about this to share with other faculty members. There are discussions regarding several possibilities for collaboration spaces.

Adjournment

There were no additional items discussed, the meeting was adjourned

Recorder, Ryan Rideau