

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
September 25, 2015

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Velva Groover, Matt Smagin, John Ferris, Rodney Irvin, Philip Young, Sallie Beth Johnson, Anne Zajac, Jack Davis, James Spotila, Wat Hopkins

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

- a. Approval of minutes
- b. Tenure home for faculty being recruited for the proposed School of Neuroscience (draft of resolution to come soon)
- c. First reading of the Faculty Senate Resolution on Governance
- d. Other items

1. Approval of minutes

The motion to approve the minutes from the September 4 with some edits. The minutes from the meeting will be edited and updated to the CFA scholar site.

2. Tenure home for faculty being recruited for the proposed School of Neuroscience (draft of the resolution to come soon)

Virginia Tech has recruited Harald Sontheimer from the University of Alabama at Birmingham to establish a School of Neuroscience. There is a resolution with the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies and the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies to establish a School of Neuroscience in the College of Science. It will require new faculty and some existing faculty. The eight department heads in the College of Science have signed a letter of support. Sontheimer has been given permission to recruit faculty for the school. He has raised the issue that it may be difficult to recruit faculty under Virginia Tech's current structure. To address his concerns, there is a proposal that until the School of Neuroscience is approved, the recruited faculty will be appointed to faculty positions in the College of Science rather than at the departmental level. Additionally, a committee of faculty members from the departments that are most relevant to the School of Neuroscience will comprise the annual evaluation committee for the recruited faculty members. This is to ensure they have feedback from faculty who are knowledgeable in their field. Their tenure home will be at the college level and they will be moved to appointments in the School of Neuroscience once the school is formally established by SCHEV. This is estimated to take place in 2016 or 2017.

There was discussion about current Virginia Tech faculty in other colleges who will be a part of the school. The goal is not to move tenure lines between colleges, but the colleges could split the appointment. Additional discussion took place about the relationship between the School of Neuroscience and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. Finally, discussion took place regarding the difference between a school and department. The School of Neuroscience will be referred to as a school because of how it is viewed in the larger academic context. For Virginia Tech's purpose, it will be treated as a department.

There was some concern about whether this proposal would encourage other colleges to hire faculty at the college-level with floating tenure homes. This is a temporary solution because the school needs faculty immediately to support the 110 current majors. This is a unique situation.

Finally, there was a concern about faculty who earn tenure in neuroscience before the school has been officially approved and their ability to be on the promotion and tenure committee. Vice Provost Finney has agreed to add a clause to the proposal that a tenured faculty member will serve on the committee after he/she is hired.

Everyone will read the resolution for next meeting, where a vote will be taken.

3. First reading of Faculty Senate Resolution on Governance

A draft of the resolution was made available via Scholar. Montasir Abbas gave a presentation about the resolution.

Current university governance has the commission sending their resolutions to University Council, and University Council then acts on resolutions and conveys their actions to the president. University Council consists of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This resolution is about the role of faculty in the governance process. For the resolution, the Faculty Senate would like a greater role in the four commissions that are most relevant to faculty affairs: the Commission on Faculty Affairs, the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies, and the Commission on Research.

The resolution states that, upon one of these commission's first review of a resolution, the resolution will be sent to the Faculty Senate for review, unless the Faculty Senate has waived its right to do so. The Faculty Senate will have four weeks to send recommendations back to the commission. The commission will then send the adopted version of the resolution to the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate will send its final recommendations to University Council to be an official part of the resolution.

There was discussion about if the four-week review period referred to four calendar weeks or four academic calendar week. It was suggested that a qualifier be added to make clear that the four-week period refers to when classes are in session.

Additional discussion occurred about why the time for review was four weeks rather than three. Since the Faculty Senate meets every other week, this was to ensure they have enough time to review and discuss the resolution.

There was lengthy discussion about II.2.c in the proposal. Members suggested that the last sentence of this section was too vague. It reads, "Significant changes to the Resolution by the Commission will need to be communicated to the Faculty Senate for appropriate deliberation by the Senate." Abbas stated that the intent behind the statement was to be flexible and to encourage communication throughout the process. Some members of the commission noted that as currently worded, a resolution could be stuck in governance indefinitely. Suggestions were provided to make the language clearer so as to encourage collaboration between the two bodies and to ensure that resolutions can move efficiently through the governance process. One of the main points of discussion was whether this section falls within the four-week review window. Members agreed to include language in the proposal to make clear that it should. An additional suggestion was made to include language to encourage Faculty Senate members serving on the commissions to report back to the Faculty Senate. The discussion concluded with Abbas agreeing to make additional edits to the resolution based on the comments and suggestions from the meeting. He will make them available for commission members on the CFA Scholar site.

4. Other Items

No additional items were discussed

Adjournment

There were no other issues discussed, the meeting was adjourned.

Recorder, Ryan Rideau