

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
December 4, 2015

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Matt Smagin, Philip Young, Rodney Irvin, Jack Davis, Deborah Good, Sally Beth Johnson, Velva Groover, James Spotila

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

- a. Update on governance resolution – vote on companion resolution
- b. Updates on COR survey
- c. Adoption of previous minutes
- d. Any other business

1. Update on governance resolution – vote on companion resolution

There is a joint resolution on the formation of a university governance task force. This resolution emerged from a meeting between the President, the Provost, Faculty Senate officers, and graduate and undergraduate students representing SGA and GSA. The consensus after that meeting was that there needs to be a resolution that indicates the need for a task force to evaluate implications of changes being proposed by the Faculty Senate.

There was discussion of two friendly amendments to the resolution that will be taken up when the resolution comes before University Council. First, eliminate “which include but are not limited to, the undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators.” Second, in the last paragraph, the statement, “recommendation for changes” should be a reworded so the resolution does not presume a recommendation of change.

The first reading of the resolution was waived. A vote was taken on the resolution. The vote was unanimous. The motion passed.

2. Updates on COR survey

There was a survey from the Commission on Research. No one from the commission was available to speak to the group about the survey. There was no discussion about the issue.

3. Adoption of previous minutes

There was a misspelling of a CFA member’s name on the November 6 minutes. This correction will be made.

There was a motion to approve the minutes. A vote was taken to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Other business

Journal Impact Factor

There is a proposal from Philip Young to make changes to the promotion and tenure guidelines. These changes are to delete references to journal impact factor (JIF), and add a brief statement prohibiting their use in the promotion and tenure process. The proposal emerges from a desire to move away from publication location as a metric because it is a poor metric of quality. Several questions were raised regarding the proposal.

There was a concern that the use of the word “prohibit” is too strong. Such a stance would be a major cultural shift for some departments.

There was a concern that while JIF is a flawed metric, it can be used to evaluate where someone is trying to publish their work and how they view themselves as a researcher.

A suggestion was raised about not taking out JIF, but expanding the language to talk about the quality of work. There could be one area to discuss the journal and another to discuss the impact of the article. Faculty members would decide how they want to show the quality of their work.

An additional concern was raised about the impact on departments. Pamplin College of Business has a list of most impactful journals in their fields. This proposal may be a major change within that college. Similarly, President Sands, in expressing concern about the lack of nationally and internationally recognized scholarship from Virginia Tech faculty, has indicated a desire to have more research published in top journals.

There was a discussion about additional metrics. Journal citations may not be the best metric because they are slow and may disadvantage younger faculty. There were suggestions to include download numbers from Researchgate. A final suggestion was to include Altmetrics, a collection of citations in blogs, newspapers, social media, and policy reports, and other nontraditional sources.

There was a discussion about open access journals. You may get more citations using open access journals than many top field journals. The library has a grant to help fund anyone at Virginia Tech who does not have a grant to publish their work through an open access format. The library also has a repository to archive work. The library will offer Network Learning Initiative courses about Altmetrics and open access funds.

For the next meeting, Young has agreed to draft language about article impact and alternative metrics to include into the resolution. He will also touch base with Associate Dean Kent Nakamoto in Business to discuss this issue.

Ombudsperson Process

The Faculty Affairs office is examining the impact of establishing an ombuds position. Once the analysis is complete, the information will be shared with college deans. The analysis will be completed before break. This item will be discussed next semester.

Adjournment

There were no additional items discussed, the meeting was adjourned

Recorder, Ryan Rideau