

Minutes

Commission on Faculty Affairs

September 20, 2024

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Burruss 330E and Zoom

Commission Members Present: J. Lemkul (presiding), R. Fricker (ex officio Provost's Office), D. Agud (Faculty Senate), R. Jin (Faculty Senate), C. Bartel (Staff Senate), J. Lahne (Faculty Senate), R. Gaines (Faculty Senate), J. Hawdon (Faculty Senate), J. McGlothlin (Faculty Senate).

Absent with Notice: K. Pitts (Dean), E. Lavender-Smith (Faculty Senate), L. Learman (Dean), V. Buechner-Maxwell (Faculty Senate), N. Connors (A/P Faculty Senate), K. Schneiderman (Undergraduate Student Senate).

Absent: N/A

Guests: E. Kim (Faculty Affairs), D. Harris (Policy and Governance).

Quorum: J. Lemkul called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. A quorum was present (50%+1 of current membership = 8).

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Consent Agenda

- a. **Review and Approval of Agenda.** Members of the commission voted unanimously to adopt the agenda.
- b. **Approval of Minutes from September 6, 2024.** A motion was made, seconded, and minutes were approved with a revision to the list of attendees.

3. Reports from Senates.

- A/P Faculty Senate: N/A.
- Staff Senate: There is an updated resolution to create a task force for adjusting the staff supplement for those who make a certain salary amount. The Senate is also trying to create an initiative for staff bereavement leave and parking.
- Undergraduate Senate Report: N/A.
- Grad/Prof Senate: N/A (position vacant).
- Faculty Senate: Last week, the Senate met with President Sands and filled UC vacancies.

4. Old Business

- a. N/A

5. New Business

- a. **First Reading of CFA 2024-25B: Resolution To Amend The Faculty Handbook Description Of Administrative Support For University Distinguished Professors. J.**

Lemkul introduced the one-sentence amendment. To clarify, there is no change to the current reporting structure. There are four components of administrative support that the Provost's Office provides UDPs: collecting recommendations, collecting EFARs, controlling operating accounts from the provost's budget, and managing specific UDP issues that arise as needed. R. Fricker will compose a memo that includes these administrative tasks as a supporting document for the first reading at UC. He also notes that this change has full support from current UDPs.

- b. **Discussion on proposed Faculty Handbook revisions regarding faculty ethics and intimate relationships.** J. Lemkul brought forward revisions to the Faculty Handbook that have incorporated suggestions from multiple constituent groups (Faculty Senators, GPSS, Provost's Office, Graduate School, etc.). It was noted that it is not legally or practically possible to prevent two consenting adults from having a relationship, so a line must be drawn between illegal actions (i.e., relating to Title IX), and unethical actions. Commission members agreed that it would be helpful to look into how other institutions have worded their documentation. Eventually, bylaws will need to be written, and protocols will need to be established on how inappropriate conduct will be handled and reported without threat of retaliation. A commission member also mentioned that wording must be clear to protect those who are already married or in committed relationships and have partners pursuing higher education. Both HR and VT legal offices will be able to provide feedback when needed. At this time, commission members are invited to make comments, as it will still take a few weeks before these revisions are formally considered.
- c. **Updates on Resolution Proposals and Plans.**
 - a. **Faculty Handbook Revisions for Clinical Faculty.** The commission is aiming to have a first reading in October. J. Lemkul will try to gather the correct audience of all relevant parties across departments.
 - b. **Creation of Discussion Forum.** At a recent faculty senate meeting, the provost and the president expressed their support for a faculty discussion forum. The goal of this forum will be to provide a safe space where faculty can feel safe sharing their thoughts on controversial issues without fear of violence.
 - c. **Appeals for Promotion to Professor.** R. Fricker volunteered to create an initial document that outlines an appeal process for P&T issues. The commission agreed that there is no existing process for these appeals. If a faculty member wants to go up for promotion but the department does not agree (or vice versa), there should be language on how to adjudicate that to balance both the rights of the individual and the department.
- d. **Discussion on Future Invitees to Commission Meetings.** Commission members suggested inviting Kay Heidbreder (University Legal Counsel) and someone from the VT Controller's Office to a future meeting.

6. Open Discussion

- a. N/A

- 7. **Adjournment.** There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and members of the commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:47 am.

