

MINUTES

Commission on Faculty Affairs

September 7, 2001

Members attending: Edd Sewell, Don Orth, Ray Plaza, Michelle Gredlics, Rich Sorensen, Tim Pratt, Rick Ashley, Bob Tracy, Pat Hyer (for Mark McNamee), Anne Zajac

Members Absent: Bill Stephenson, Richard Goff, Richard Cothren, Deborah Mayo, Jackie Davis

Edd Sewell initiated introductions, made general announcements and asked for a motion to adopt the agenda, which was passed.

1. Overload compensation for credit continuing education coursework  
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Pat Hyer gave background on the policy that had been approved electronically by CFA, then by the Board of Visitors, over the summer. The policy sets compensation guidelines for faculty members who are involved in teaching credit distance learning courses, either via technology or delivered off-campus in person, on an overload basis. The policy guidelines were established to serve the needs of businesses and organizations looking for credit professional development opportunities for their employees. Courses would normally be taught as part of a contract with that organization or business. The Board approved the policy four years ago as a pilot, and the pilot was extended after CFA recommended a number of revisions in 1998. The policy will now be distributed to all faculty members and incorporated in the Faculty Handbook.

2. Minutes from EOAA Committee (which were sent out this summer)  
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The EOAA Committee minutes reflect initial discussions about the creation of a new commission on diversity-related issues. Pat Hyer pointed out that a subcommittee has been working over the summer to draft such a proposal. The new commission would replace the EOAA Committee. A motion to accept the minutes was moved, seconded and approved.

3. Potential Issues List  
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Edd Sewell suggested the Commission meet when there are things to meet about. If there were not any or insufficient pressing issues, the meeting times already set aside would be canceled. The issues that might be considered by the Commission this year are:

a) Issues relating to the goal to become a top 30 research university. Bob Tracy mentioned the pattern at many research-intensive institutions has been to turn teaching responsibilities over to non-tenure track faculty. We need to consider carefully the consequences of this change if we move in this direction.

b) Promotion and Tenure Criteria: The report of the special task force is complete and will be distributed by the Provost to the deans. This commission may have a role in certain policy recommendations recommended by the committee. Rich Sorensen served on the committee, and he was able to elaborate on the impetus for the committee and the general direction of the

recommendations.

c) Intellectual Properties: A small committee was charged with making further editorial recommendations for the intellectual property policy. Edd Sewell is not certain of their progress over the summer. However, the IP policy is expected to return for further consideration this fall.

d) Faculty Parking: Bob Tracy described the problem of faculty parking on home game days. During the last game, the small Pamplin lot, which was to be set aside for faculty parking for work-related reasons, was not available. This is a violation of the spirit if not the letter of the policy approved by University Council in May 99, which said that anyone with a valid VT parking permit could park on campus during game day without paying a fee. Tracy feels that administration does not take the needs of faculty very seriously; he suggested some further discussion with the appropriate parties may be needed to effect a workable resolution to game-day parking problems. Sewell suggested the Commission invite Steve Mouras to speak at a meeting.

4. Other possible business

a) Diplomas at graduation: Rick Ashley distributed a statement given to him by a faculty member recommending that the university no longer distribute diplomas at graduation. A number of problems stem from this commitment to pass out actual diplomas at the graduation ceremony, which many colleges have chosen to avoid by not giving out a real diploma at that time. Three related issues were identified: the school calendar, tentative grades, and distribution of actual diplomas. It was decided that this was a CUS&P issue and not totally within jurisdiction of CFA. CFA might explore the topic and ask CUS&P to consider it, if it appears that it is an issue of relatively widespread importance among faculty. Edd Sewell may bring up this issue at the upcoming meeting of all commission chairs with the president.

b) Review of Department Heads (on going topic from last year). The issue of annual evaluations for department heads was referred to the Senate last year, but the Senate then became preoccupied with other issues. Tim Pratt will bring any recommendation back to CFA after the Senate looks at it.

Given several necessary absences for September 21, that CFA meeting will be cancelled. The next meeting will be Oct. 5.

Recorder: Sara Beth Keough and Pat Hyer

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Judy Davis, CPS/CAP  
Administrative Assistant  
President's Office, Virginia Tech  
210 Burruss Hall (0131)  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  
(540) 231-6232 FAX: (540) 231-4265  
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**Minutes**  
**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**October 5, 2001**

**Members attending:** Rick Ashley, Jackie Davis, Michelle Gredlics, Pat Hyer, Mark McNamee, Don Orth, Ray Plaza, Matt Powers, Tim Pratt, Edd Sewell, Rich Sorenson, Bob Tracy, Anne Zajac

**Members Absent:** Bill Stephenson, Richard Goff, Richard Cothren, Deborah Mayo

Sewell initiated introductions and listed the two items on the agenda: (1) Provost on Promotion and Tenure Final Report, and (2) Richard McCoy from Parking Services. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

1. Provost Mark McNamee on Promotion and Tenure Final Report

McNamee began by making some general statements. He said he was pleased to be at VT and a part of this Commission. He is still learning the governance system and sees some efficiencies, involvement at all levels being one. McNamee values and treasures what faculty bring to the table and recommends that we take full advantage of the activities of faculty on campus. He then opened the floor for questions or comments either for him or about the report.

Pratt asked how we might achieve our ambitious goals in a steady-state or resource-scarce environment. McNamee responded that we need to make careful hiring and tenure decisions, looking for good people who are flexible enough to make changes as needed, and perhaps by not filling all of our positions at once, allowing us to deploy resources in short-term bursts to meet unusual enrollment pressures, for example. We may also need to collect retirement positions centrally or at least at the college level so they can be redeployed. He also favors the idea of faculty teaching outside of their core department to relieve stress on those departments where the loads are unmanageable or unreasonable.

Sewell asked what the Top 30 Goal is going to mean in teaching/research and promotion. McNamee said the expectation for new faculty will change. If we currently tilt a marginal tenure decision to support the individual, we may need to tilt these difficult cases toward denial to be sure that we are making a lifetime investment in someone who will be truly productive. What is important is that people understand and expect higher standards.

In response to a question about how to keep our truly high-profile faculty at VT, McNamee responded that this will be an even greater problem in the future when we become even more visible to top-tier institutions. Department heads must be in tune to the needs of these faculty members, responding to or even anticipating needs and solving problems whenever possible before they become too large to handle. One can show faculty members that their efforts and activities are valued in a wide variety of ways and we need to give recognition of contributions whenever possible. If excellent people still choose to leave, you must take a deep breath and try to recruit someone even better.

Plaza asked McNamee how we might balance excellence with diversity. McNamee does not accept the notion that a diverse faculty and an excellent faculty are different things. In his experience, recruitment of a diverse faculty brings in fresh ideas and helps to attract other talented faculty and graduate students.

Sewell asked McNamee for his reaction to the report on promotion and tenure. McNamee responded that recommendations in the report seem common sense. One thing that surprised him was the variation in the use of external letters in the tenure review process. He said letters should be reviewed *during* the process and not afterwards. The two-step review process recommended for the university-level deliberations appears to allow them to spend time on the most difficult or problematic cases by agreeing quickly on those which clearly meet or exceed the standard.

Sewell asked McNamee how one can solicit letters that are fair; in some fields, this is very difficult. McNamee said this is done through careful selection of letter writers by the head and/or explanation by the head of how a particular letter should be read or valued. As a way of encouraging difficult decisions to be made at the lowest possible level, McNamee suggested that the position should be retained at the level which first said no. Tracy asked if shifting University research priorities should affect tenure decisions. McNamee said that would be a mistake, in his view, since it would likely result in mediocre research programs as faculty shift their research agenda to match whatever appeared to be the latest area of focus. While private universities often do make tenure decisions in this way, we should not, in his view.

The recommendation that faculty members promoted to full professor evidence excellence in at least two areas of the university mission and that one of those must be research/scholarship leads to questions for some departments. Powers asked how departments that place more emphasis on teaching will be affected, Architecture, for example. McNamee said that "scholarly contributions" differ by discipline. Zajac expressed concern from the Vet Med perspective. The heavy clinical/service commitment for some Vet Med faculty does not allow time for research. McNamee asked her how we can deal with that. Zajac replied that their recent research retreat touched on these issues, but there are no good answers yet. McNamee suggested the idea of a "clinical professor" title, which might have different expectations. Current practice is to review a faculty member's accomplishments in relation to their assignment, so those in Engineering Fundamentals, for example, would have strong emphasis on instruction and advising, and those with extension appointments would similarly demonstrate accomplishments in extension.

McNamee asked what will happen next with the report. Hyer responded that she had reviewed the report with Legal Counsel to determine what needed approval and by whom. Recommendations dealing with procedural matters, such as external letters, can be dealt with by directive from the Provost; these do not change any of the statements or expectations in the Handbook. The recommendations dealing with the explicit statement of TWO areas of excellence, something everyone already thought was in the Handbook but was not, and the extension of committee appointments from two to three years need formal approval through governance and the Board of Visitors. McNamee suggested that faculty confidence will increase if the CFA reviews the document and votes on it. The recommendations represent an important statement and he supports their approval. Sorensen said that after considerable investigation of policies at other institutions the Ad Hoc committee felt our current policies and processes were appropriate, but they needed more uniformity in implementation. He used the variation in use of late letters from external reviewers as an example of a procedural inconsistency that needed to be dealt with. McNamee said that the adoption of the report is a cultural change. Sorensen reported that faculty representatives on the Ad Hoc Committee argued strongly that if the University is committed to the Top 30 Goal, it will have to operate differently.

Dr. McNamee is on the agenda of the next Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the report and its ramifications. The report should also be distributed to faculty associations and comments received by the Commission from all interested parties. Sewell said this will be the primary item

on the CFA agenda at the next meeting. He recommended that Commission members discuss this report with colleagues in their departments.

## 2. Richard McCoy: Parking Services

Sewell introduced McCoy from Parking Services and explained that the reason for his invitation stemmed from parking concerns expressed to Commission representatives. Orth explained that Saturday is a day for faculty and graduate students to work. He asked what could be done to accommodate them. McCoy said there has been a policy in place since 1999 that allotted parking for athletics and for other users. Hahn, Pamplin, and the Ag Quad have been designated for faculty/staff parking; B lot is available for graduate students. There are new personnel involved in parking management on game days and there have been some problems. Pamplin was not reserved for faculty/staff at the first game, a mistake that has been corrected. At a subsequent game, sheriff's deputies apparently did not allow faculty/staff access to the Pamplin lot entrance. Parking Services is working diligently on educating all personnel working on game days to this issue. Tracy asked why faculty are not allowed to park in Derring Lot if there is space. McCoy explained that athletics oversells each of their designated lots by 10% or so. He expects Derring to be considerably busier for some of the upcoming games that attract the largest crowds. Tracy asked if Athletics reimburses Parking Services for maintenance resulting from football parking; McCoy said yes. Parking Services will work on a case-by-case basis with departments or groups who have campus events that turn out to be in conflict with a game time changed at the last minute. Department heads receive notes from Parking Services about lot and route changes; some faculty do not receive them because they are not forwarded, but they are trying hard to keep people informed.

Next meeting October 19, 2001

Recorder: Sara Beth Keough

Minutes  
Commission on Faculty Affairs  
October 19, 2001

Members attending: Richard Goff, Jackie Davis, Tim Pratt, Rick Ashley, Bob Tracey, Pat Hyer (for McNamee), Rich Sorensen, Edd Sewell, Anne Zajac

Members absent: Bill Stephenson, Don Orth, Richard Cothren, Deborah Mayo, Ray Plaza, Matt Powers, Michelle Gredlics

The agenda was adopted with the addition of acceptance of the EOAA Minutes of September 20, 2002.

1. Discussion of EOAA Committee Minutes: Pat Hyer and Richard Goff provided some additional information on the discussion underway in the EOAA committee concerning the proposed Commission on Diversity. The EOAA Committee minutes of September 20<sup>th</sup> were accepted.

2. Further Discussion of Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Promotion and Tenure Committee: The commission focused on recommendations on pages 5-6 of the report, which were specifically identified for CFA consideration.

a) Recommendation concerning lengthening the appointment of faculty representatives to the University P&T Committee from two to three years: CFA members noted that three-year assignments were the norm on major departmental or college committees. Faculty representatives to the university P&T Committee found that they needed several years of experience to contribute significantly to the deliberations. A motion was made to increase the length of appointment from two to three years. The motion passed unanimously.

b) Recommendation concerning two areas of excellence required for promotion to full: There was widespread agreement on the commission and across the university that promotion to full professor should require evidence of excellence in TWO areas. However, the Faculty Handbook does not state that. Commission members found no problem documenting this requirement. The discussion focused on the further recommendation in the report that one of those areas of excellence should be research and scholarship. Understanding that research and scholarship should be interpreted very broadly would be critical. Ernest Boyer's work on the four types of scholarship (*Scholarship Reconsidered* identified scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching) underlies this presumption. Nevertheless, there was concern that faculty members whose appointments did not include a significant research component would be seriously disadvantaged in the promotion process – Engineering Fundamentals, clinical faculty in Veterinary Medicine, and faculty with significant extension appointments are among those who might be negatively affected.

The Commission considered these variations in faculty assignment and whether further information and reaction needed to be gathered by inviting guests from affected departments to a Commission meeting, or by distributing the report to the college associations and soliciting feedback. A motion was made to table any decision on this aspect of the recommendation until Dr. McNamee had an opportunity to visit with the Faculty Senate in November. The motion was approved.

A proposal to add the word “normally” as in “must excel in two areas, one of which is normally research and scholarship” was considered and received some support. That would still allow the statement to be made, while recognizing that not all faculty roles entail opportunity for significant contribution to research.

c) Discussion re handling of external letters: Rich Sorensen described some of the issues behind the recommendation concerning external letters: some departments appear to allow letters from co-authors at other institutions, others do not; status of the writer is an issue in some departments; in some cases, it appears that the committee makes a tentative assessment first and then seeks letters to support that decision, others make the decision based on letters received; some do not allow late letters to be forwarded to subsequent levels, others do; some departments allow faculty members to contribute to the list of external reviewers, others do not; and so on. After discussion of some of these variations and agreement that greater consistency might be in the best interest of faculty members and the university, the Commission decided that this recommendation might better be dealt with in detail by the University Promotion and Tenure Committee which would have a much better knowledge of these departmental and college differences than CFA. The matter will be referred back to Dr. McNamee and the University P&T committee.

3. Parking: Yet another unanticipated problem occurred during the most recent game. The Pamplin lot which was to be reserved for faculty filled very early on Saturday morning because of SAT takers. Faculty members who came later in the morning were not permitted to park in the Derring lot even though the game did not begin until 6:30. Lot attendants appear to have no flexibility to make judgments about how to handle these problems.

4. Distribution of diplomas: Edd Sewell reported that the Academic Support Committee, which reports to CUS&P, would like CFA to consider the matter of distributing actual diplomas at graduation. Our long-standing commitment to distributing diplomas at graduation creates serious stress points for faculty members grading late final exams and for administrative offices which have to assure that diplomas are completely accurate and available for every student who is supposed to graduate. Edd Sewell will talk to Wanda Dean about preparing a statement of pros and cons on this topic and her views on which commission is the most appropriate one to handle the matter. Regardless of which commission takes the lead, at least four commissions will have an interest – CFA, CSA, CUS&P, and CGS&P.

The meeting was adjourned.

Recorder,

Patricia Hyer



**Minutes**  
**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**January 18, 2002**

Members present: Edd Sewell, Richard Goff, Anne Zajac, Robert Tracy, Diane Zahm, Ray Plaza, Jackie Davis, Matt Powers, Ed Henneke (for Stephenson), Tim Pratt, Don Orth, Deborah Mayo, Pat Hyer (for McNamee)

Members absent: Richard Sorensen, Richard Cothren, Michelle Gredlics, Rick Ashley

Guests: Ben Dixon, Ellen Plummer

1. Commission members accepted the December 18<sup>th</sup> EOAA Committee. A discussion followed about the protocol for handling Commencement Committee minutes, during which it was reaffirmed that CFA should formally review and accept minutes from that committee as well since it reports to CFA. Subsequent to the meeting, minutes of the October EOAA Committee minutes were distributed to members and accepted electronically.

2. University Council Resolution to Establish a Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Richard Goff, who is also on the EOAA Committee, introduced the proposal to establish a new Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity. There are two advisory groups currently dealing with this set of issues: the EOAA Committee and the Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (ACDMA). The new commission would replace these two advisory bodies and provide a more systematic way of handling important issues related to diversity by a body with greater visibility and authority. The two bodies originating the proposal (EOAA and ACDMA) have worked very deliberately over the summer and fall and there is very strong support among their large memberships for the proposed commission. Goff observed that it seems to him that we are committed to diversity at Virginia Tech as an abstract principle, but it is not as clear that we have acted to make diversity a reality. Creating an infrastructure for consideration of these policy and programmatic issues is an important institutional statement that we need to make in his view.

CFA members inquired about the relatively large size of the commission (30 members). The initial hope was that the commission would be smaller and presumably more manageable as a committee. However, the proposed configuration represents a careful balance of interests, with representatives from colleges, the two senates, administration, and various communities. It is critical that the new commission have credibility within the minority and women's communities since assuring that diverse perspectives are at the table is an important rationale for the creation of the commission. The proposed membership reflects long and thoughtful negotiations about acceptable

representation. While there are other constituency groups that could be named, the proposal allows for emerging or smaller groups to be represented through the at-large positions. Review of the membership would occur within four years to determine if the proposed plan is working.

Overlap of issues with other commissions might be a concern. The new commission will need to work in collaboration with other commissions when it tackles issues related to the charge of other groups, for example curriculum or faculty retention. However, this pattern is already well established in governance and exists on other issues. The new commission creates opportunities to shape policy and to develop institutional responses to concerns and situations as they arise — many of the right people or groups will be around the table to deal with issues as the need is identified. In response to a question about whether the new commission was the right answer or the best structural response to diversity issues at Tech, Ben Dixon responded that it is not THE answer, but a tool for the institution to use in creating change and making improvements. For example, the new commission would have been very helpful in the development of the diversity strategic plan and is expected to be the principal body to monitor our progress toward achieving our goals. The commission does not replace all other diversity efforts underway on campus, although the two originating advisory bodies would be eliminated.

Deborah Mayo raised concerns about adequate faculty voice in hiring procedures, a discussion underway in the Faculty Senate. Would the new commission be involved in addressing this issue? It would appear that the commission might be an appropriate body from which to seek advice about important policy or procedural changes.

Ben Dixon closed the discussion by stating that he felt Virginia Tech was at a new place in its discussions concerning diversity. He could not have imagined that within the relatively short time since his arrival that we would be talking seriously about the creation of a commission such as this. The proposal, and the widespread support that it has received to date, suggest that the open dialogue that has been underway for several years has moved us to a place where we are ready to mainstream diversity issues and to give them serious institutional attention.

Bob Tracy made a motion that the Commission on Faculty Affairs support the approval of the resolution to the Faculty Senate, which will be introduced at its February meeting. The motion was seconded and approved. There were two abstentions and no dissenting votes.

3. Agenda items for future meetings: a proposal from Alumni Affairs concerning Virginia Tech academic regalia.

The meeting was adjourned.

Recorder,

Patricia B. Hyer

**Minutes**  
**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**February 1, 2002**

Members Present: Edd Sewell, Diane Zahm, Ray Plaza, Rich Sorensen, Pat Hyer (for McNamee), Anne Zajac, Jackie Davis, Tim Pratt, Richard Goff

Members Absent: Ed Henneke, Rick Ashley, Don Orth, Robert Tracy, Richard Cothren, Deborah Mayo, Michelle Gredlics, Matt Powers

Guest: Tom Tillar

1. Agenda: Agenda was adopted.
2. Minutes: The CFA minutes of 1/18/02 were approved with one minor correction.
3. Special VT Regalia:  
There has been interest over a number of years in creating a special design for Virginia Tech regalia (doctoral graduation gowns). Tom Tillar and the Alumni Association agreed to take the lead on requesting a design from a manufacturer and sharing samples with members of the community. Having been through several designs and possibilities, he is now visiting various groups to reach an agreement on whether to proceed with establishing a standardized design for VT regalia and what it should look like. Special regalia designed for Virginia Tech introduces one more tradition, distinguishing our doctoral graduates. Tillar showed commission members a gown reflecting the anticipated design. The basic gown would remain traditional black, in whatever fabric was chosen by those who purchased it. The gown would have dark maroon velvet trim down the front, embroidered with a pair of VT seals in orange thread. The hood would be the same as it has been — maroon and orange satin lining edged with color reflecting the discipline. Oak Hall, the vendor, prepared a number of other designs, including embroidered pylons, the VT symbol, and other options, however, the seal resulted in a more recognizable and appropriate image. Tillar has already visited with the Commencement Committee and other appropriate groups to share the design. Each has approved the concept of special regalia and people seem to have liked the proposed design.

A motion was made to approve the concept of a VT gown. The motion was seconded and approved. Members felt the design was attractive and that Tillar should proceed with the project.

4. Discussion re Budget Reductions:  
The chair asked for reactions and concerns about the pending budget reductions. Since the Commission has as part of its charge issues related to faculty morale and employment, it would seem important that the Commission should try to address any aspect of these on which it might make a difference.

The importance of maintaining lines of communication is critical. Many units cannot reach their target reductions through reductions in operations alone. Faculty positions will have to be eliminated.

Rich Sorensen described the way in which the Pamplin College of Business was approaching their considerable reduction target. They hope to be able to provide retirement incentives, although such incentive plans have not yet been made available by the university.

Members made a number of suggestions about how communication might be improved. The amount of information and the extent of faculty involvement in planning for reductions appears to vary greatly across departments. Some members reported a great deal of involvement in their department discussions, while faculty in other departments appear to have little official (albeit uncertain) information to go on. Because the university has chosen not to impose a university-wide freeze, there is also great variation in whether departments are proceeding with searches or not. Among the specific suggestions for improved communication tools were a budget hotline or website, just MORE information generally from top administrators, more access to faculty members to state and national level news so they have a better sense of the bigger picture, a published Q&A on budget issues or rumors, more in Spectrum, and more letters to faculty. The more methods of providing information, the better, since all faculty do not get their information from the same source.

Recorder,

Patricia B. Hyer

**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**Minutes**  
**March 15, 2002**

Members Present: Edd Sewell, Bob Tracy, Don Orth, Jackie Davis, Anne Zajac, Richard Goff, Deborah Mayo, Ray Paza, Patricia Hyer, Leon Geyer (for Rick Ashley), Diane Zahm

Members Absent: Rich Sorensen, Ed Henneke (for Malcolm McPherson), Tim Pratt, Michelle Gredics, Matt Powers,

Guests: Ed Lenier

1. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion and Tenure

CFA chair, Edd Sewell, reintroduced the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion and Tenure concerning the requirement for excellence in two areas, one of which must be research or scholarship, for promotion to full professor. The Commission's position on this recommendation has not yet been decided. Members reflected on the differences in the definition of scholarship in various disciplines and whether they were adequately captured by the terms of research, scholarship and creative accomplishments, as the category is currently headed in the guidelines for preparation of the dossier. Zajac reported considerable discomfort among clinical colleagues in Veterinary Medicine with the requirement for genuine excellence in research or scholarship when their assignments were only designated as 10% research. Although many may be involved in preparing and publishing descriptions of cases and presenting at conferences, this activity may not be judged as genuine excellence when it is such a relatively small aspect of their work. Zajac would prefer a modifier to the statement, such as normally so that those with different assignments might be more successful in making a case for promotion to full without having as extensive a record of research and scholarship as others with a higher proportional research assignment. Members were unsure whether clinical faculty members currently reported such activities as research or as service.

Zahm and others, however, felt that the requirement to demonstrate excellence in research or scholarship was an important and clear statement of where the university was headed, and that this still allowed for different types of scholarship to be documented. Use of a modifier, such as normally, weakens the statement and the standard by which most faculty members would be measured for promotion to full professor.

Sewell volunteered to draw up a statement supporting excellence (eliminating the word genuine) in two areas, including one of which must be research, scholarship, or creative achievement, and to provide some explanatory language to accompany such a statement. CFA will consider his proposal at the next meeting.

Hyer will prepare a formal resolution concerning the extension of the length of appointment from two to three years for members of the university

promotion and tenure committee. This recommendation had been previously approved by CFA, but has not yet been forwarded to University Council for action.

## 2. Workforce Reduction Strategies

Hyer briefed CFA on the two strategies for managing workforce reductions that are to be presented to the Board of Visitors on March 18th for consideration and approval. The framework for the first proposal, called the Alternative Severance Option, is the Commonwealth's Severance Policy and the Code of Virginia, which provide severance benefits for faculty and classified staff affected by involuntary separations. Senior managers will prepare a business plan outlining the anticipated number of positions and/or salary dollars to be reduced and the types of position to be affected, such as teaching and research faculty, administrative/professional faculty, and/or classified staff. Eligible employees in the affected units will apply for voluntary separation or retirement and receive either a transitional severance payment or enhancements to their VRS retirement if selected. The Attorney General's Office has confirmed that the Board has the authority to allow faculty members to self-identify for separation or retirement, thereby becoming eligible for receipt of the severance benefit. The university is actively seeking approval of this option for classified employees as well. Virginia Tech has led the initiative at the state level by developing the concept, sharing documents with other institutions and soliciting their support, and meeting with state officials to press for approval.

For long-term faculty members vested in VRS who select the enhanced retirement benefit, they will receive about six years of additional service credit or age. The value of the severance benefit is divided by 15% of salary for each year of additional retirement credit. Those faculty members participating in an optional retirement plan may have the ability to shelter some of the severance benefit in a 403B account. The cost to the university is about 90% of the employee's salary, thus there will be substantial transition costs to implementing the option. The state has not provided any state-funded early retirement program for use by state agencies to manage the budget reduction.

Commission members discussed the possibility that some faculty members may be disappointed if they are not selected to receive the benefit in a case where there are more employees who apply than are needed to meet reduction targets. Programmatic impact will be an important criterion for selecting among applicants. The option allows long-term employees to self-select for participation and to receive a substantial benefit if chosen, thereby reducing the number of classified layoffs and involuntary terminations of other employees. The application window for this option will be necessarily be brief, so that administrators can determine if enough volunteers applied to meet reduction targets.

The Board will also be asked to approve a second program as a back up plan — the Separation Incentive Plan. Tenured faculty members at least 45 years of age with ten years of service would be eligible for a payment of one-third of salary for each of two years, and for health care contributions for a three-year

period. This plan is presented as an alternative that may be useful in certain circumstances. No specific application window will be established at this time. From the viewpoint of an employee, the Alternative Severance Option presents a more favorable benefit since it can be applied directly to retirement credit.

Recorder,  
Patricia Hyer



**Minutes  
Commission on Faculty Affairs  
April 19, 2002**

Members present: Edd Sewell, Matt Powers, Ray Plaza, Rick Ashley, Tim Pratt, Don Orth, Jackie Davis, Ed Henneke, Anne Zajac, Diane Zahm, Pat Hyer, Richard Goff, Bob Tracey

Members absent: Rich Sorensen, Michele Gredlics

The minutes of April 5, 2002 were approved.

Edd Sewell reported that the two CFA resolutions concerning promotion to full professor and length of appointment on the university P&T committee were given a first reading at the April 5 University Council meeting. There were relatively few questions; a concern was expressed by an engineering faculty member about the possible impact on faculty in Engineering Fundamentals.

Football games on weekdays:

Sewell contacted Jim Weaver, Athletic Director, and invited him to join this meeting of CFA. Weaver regretted that he was not available for this meeting since he was involved major university events surrounding the spring football game. Weaver shared that the evening game dates and times are controlled in large part by ESPN since the Big East has a contract with them for televising games. The two evening games next fall will be Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> against Marshall and November 20<sup>th</sup> against West Virginia University. Members continued to express some concern about disruption of classes and work schedules associated with emptying parking lots by mid afternoon so that fans who had purchased special game parking would have access to those lots. The Faculty Senate officers, or similar small group, will initiate a meeting with Jim Weaver, Steve Mouras, and perhaps David Ford, sometime this summer to convey concerns and provide some input into parking arrangements for these evening games during the fall.

Other matters:

A question was raised about how the proposed resolutions concerning the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity and the Martin Luther King Day Observance fared in recent forums. Jackie Davis reported that the Staff Senate ratified the new commission proposal, but proposed three amendments. Only one is truly substantive; it calls for allowing students to be selected as at-large members, not just staff or faculty. Another amendment states that two nominations for each at-large position would be forwarded to the President who would then make the final decision.

Concerning the proposal on MLK Day Observance, Sewell observed that the academic calendar committee, which he chairs, had been consulted and discussed how to accommodate the additional day off. The calendar committee operates within so many constraints concerning the number of days in the

semester, which day final exams begin, a required reading day, and so on, that there actually is very little room for negotiation on the calendar. The committee supported the resolution and will have to revisit the list of constraints in order to accommodate the additional day off of classes. Many universities have done so and there are several possible options.

Sewell reported that the faculty committee formed to advise the Provost on restructuring the colleges has met several times and those conversations are on-going. The Faculty Senate also opened up a discussion on computer and privacy issues at their last meeting, because of the recent incident involving a faculty member in women's studies whose computer was removed as part of a police investigation. The Senate's discussion with police chief, Debra Duncan, led to the conclusion that it would be helpful to have a protocol for dealing with similar incidents and that faculty involvement in developing such guidelines would be welcomed. Many faculty members are not aware of their obligations as state employees and the "acceptable use of computers" policy. Sewell suggested that perhaps CFA ought to take some time to review sections of the Handbook to be sure they were up to date and still appropriate.

The Faculty Senate task force on faculty hiring has made a report to the Senate and awaits their guidance on whether feedback would be provided to the Provost or other administrators.

Diane Zahm will be chair of CFA next year. In order to create more continuity and provide better preparation for the role as chair of CFA, the Senate Secretary would be elected as a CFA member the prior year.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55.

Recorder,

Patricia Hyer