

**Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes of the September 13, 2002 Meeting**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Rick Ashley, Jackie Davis, Leon Geyer, Richard Goff, William Greenberg, Sam Hicks, Don Orth, Ray Plaza, Tim Pratt, Bob Tracy, Diane Zahm; GUESTS: Michael Karmis

Zahm initiated introductions and listed the three items on the agenda: (1) Draft Policy on Faculty Commitment to the University; (2) Meeting dates for the 2002-2003 academic year; (3) Issues to be covered on the 2002-2003 agenda. The day's agenda was approved.

The minutes from the April 19, 2002 meeting were approved.

1. Draft Policy on Faculty Commitment to the University. Mike Karmis outlined the history of the Conflicts of Commitment Policy. The issue of "conflict of commitment" arose out of discussions related to the university's conflict of interest policy. The proposed policy is the work of the Task Force on Conflicts of Commitment, which was created by the Provost and charged with developing a constructive and effective framework for time spent by faculty on external activities.

Although it is clear that the university values external activities, the current one-day-per-week policy is confusing, and reporting of external activities is inconsistent. A clear, relevant and transparent commitment statement/policy is needed, one that affords some flexibility for faculty and administration, but one that also passes the "public perception test."

The Committee has proposed a general statement of principles, plus the addition of an annual Faculty Activity Plan, which would provide for a conversation between the department head and individual faculty members regarding both internal and external commitments. Karmis pointed out that individual departments have different requirements for, and applications of, the Faculty Activity Reports. The task force wanted a dynamic document that could be used to plan, with the provision that the plan could be changed; overall the plan would form the basis for evaluating commitment.

Zahm questioned how the Plan related to the Commitment Policy. Karmis explained it would serve as a means of honest communication between faculty and their department heads. The plan was not intended as a mechanism for department heads to give their approval on faculty should spend their time, but as a way to encourage communication as well as a way to protect faculty.

Hicks questioned why additional documents were needed: if an activity doesn't interfere with a faculty member doing his/her job, there are no issues; and if there is a problem the Department head would have to take action, with or without the plan. Karmis indicated the proposed process would be a more formal way to document and protect the faculty member from situations where faculty and department head disagree on responsibilities. For example, if a faculty member owns a company, this is not a conflict of interest, but it

has the potential to create problems if it is not clear how the faculty member is expected to spending his/her time.

Pratt noted the need for academic freedom and value of tenure, because it allows for a difference of opinion. Greenberg questioned whether plan is a violation of academic freedom because it requires approval by the department head. According to Karmis, the Faculty Activity Plan provides an opportunity for discussion but is not a “permission slip” that the department head has to sign off on.

Orth made the point that currently it is difficult to clearly define “academic workload” because there are no clear boundaries as to when faculty do their work (i.e., 9-5, after 5, weekends, etc.). This is a way for professor and department head to discuss so the department knows what a reasonable workload is.

Zahm suggested that CFA members collect comments from their colleagues and email them to her. Faculty Commitment on the draft policy will be considered by the CFA.

2. Meeting Schedule for 2002-2003. Zahm noted that meetings had been scheduled for the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month throughout the year. She asked if any CFA members had conflicts with this meeting time. There being none, the schedule was adopted.

3. Issues to be considered during 2002-2003.

- § Draft policy on Faculty Commitment to the University (to be continued at the September 27th meeting)
- § General updates to, and streamlining of, the Faculty Handbook, e.g., teaching policies need to be revised to reflect contemporary practice
- § Faculty morale, and opportunities for non-cash compensation or other forms of “appreciation” (tentatively scheduled for the October 25th meeting)
- § Faculty diversity
- § University restructuring (tentatively scheduled for the October 25th meeting)
- § Implications of university fundraising on individual colleges
- § Hiring policies and procedures for faculty and administration
- § Tentative grades, grade submission procedures, and diplomas at graduation

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40pm.

Minutes
Commission on Faculty Affairs
September 27, 2002

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Don Orth, Ray Plaza, Tim Pratt, Sam Hicks, Diane Zahm, William Greenberg, Richard Goff, Pat Hyer, Sam Easterling for Leon Geyer, Lay Nam Chang

Zahm called the meeting to order with one item on the agenda: (1) Review of changes made to the draft policy on Faculty Commitment to the University. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

Policy on Faculty Commitment to the University:

The draft policy on Faculty Commitment to the University discussed at the first meeting of CFA was circulated to department colleagues by several members. Zahm and Greenberg then revised the draft policy, incorporating suggestions from CFA and others.

Zahm reported that there was a great deal of opposition to the proposed requirement to create a Faculty Activity Plan (FAP) that was intended to guide conversation between faculty members and department heads about involvement in external activities. Additional annual reporting requirements for all faculty members would be especially unwelcome in this current climate. Zahm raised the question whether that portion would be kept.

Hyer described the reasons that the FAP approach was included in the draft policy. Communication problems between faculty members and department heads have been a topic of concern by previous CFA chairs, who have argued that heads often have little idea of the activities faculty members are engaged in. Faculty members in the College of Veterinary Medicine already use the FAP to report their planned activities and to get concurrence from the department head. The FAP was seen to be a mechanism to have a constructive, a priori conversation about external activities between the faculty member and department head and to get approval so that the faculty member was protected should questions be raised later.

Several CFA members questioned whether the Faculty Activity Plan was redundant, if its purposes were already carried out through the section of the Faculty Activity Report which addressed plans for the next year. Other members stated that the faculty activity report forms used in their college did not include such a section.

Several alternative strategies were suggested and discussed by CFA members. Commission members ultimately favored identifying several alternatives for reporting – the Faculty Activity Plan, the future plans section of the Faculty Activity Report, a letter to the department head, or completion of the appropriate form would all be acceptable.

Zahm agreed to revise several key points in the draft and distribute it as an attachment. Members would then review and comment on these changes by e-mail. After changes have

been agreed to, the document will be circulated for a period of time for further comment by other faculty members before final approval and submission to University Council for action. Arrangements will be made to bring it in front of several key groups including the Deans' Council and the Faculty Senate; it will also be sent back to the Task Force that developed the policy for their final review

Minutes prepared by Catherine Martin, Graduate Assistant and Patricia Hyer, Associate Provost

Minutes
Commission on Faculty Affairs
October 25, 2002

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Jackie Davis, Peter Eyre, Richard Goff, William Greenberg, Sam Hicks, Andrew Jayne, Mark McNamee, Don Orth, Diane Zahm

Zahm called the meeting to order with four items on the agenda: (1) Review of changes made to the draft policy on Faculty Commitment to the University, (2) Overload pay policy changes, (3) Faculty Handbook printing, (4) Review of changes made to Faculty Search Policy. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

Policy on Faculty Commitment to the University:

Minor editorial changes to the draft policy were made, with the unanimous approval of the CFA the draft policy will be returned to the Task Force on Conflicts of Commitment. After the Task Force reviews it, and their approval is gained, it will be sent to the University Council to be voted on.

Overload Pay Policy changes:

Hyer had previously distributed a resolution making a minor modification to the policy allowing additional compensation for faculty members delivering credit continuing education courses. Typically these would be courses that an organization, agency, or corporation would contract with the university to deliver to their employees on a tuition plus cost basis. The proposed modifications would include credit courses for executive/professional audiences in the definition of eligible programs, even if individual enrollment occurred, and would allow faculty members teaching in such programs to receive additional compensation even if they teaching were at the same location as their home base. These changes were requested to accommodate the Executive MBA program planned for Northern Virginia. The Provost's office would like to take the modifications directly to the Board at their November meeting and the request to CFA was to determine if there were any objections to this process. No objections were raised and several members supported the move for immediate Board approval.

Faculty Handbook:

Due to the high cost of printing updated copies of the Faculty Handbook for distribution to all faculty, an alternative strategy was proposed to distribute hard copies of the Handbook to new faculty and to any faculty member requesting a complete update. Faculty members would receive a notice, via email, of the availability of the updated Handbook on the VT web page. Included within the email would be an offer to provide a hard copy upon request. The CFA unanimously approved this measure.

Faculty Search Policy changes:

Provost McNamee introduced the Faculty Search Policy changes, describing the document as one that should achieve multiple goals. The document sets the guidelines for conducting a faculty or administrative search that would seek the most diverse pool of

qualified applicants for an open position. The procedures hold the deans or other senior administrators accountable for the search process and outcomes. Provost McNamee also stressed that the document outlined the legal requirements that were to be followed during a faculty or administrative search.

After the meeting, Zahm will circulate, via email, changes to the Faculty Search Policy to CFA members for their review.

Other:

Provost McNamee addressed the CFA about the tough budget conditions that the University is facing; he encouraged direct communication between administration and faculty.

Zahm suggested that due to the budget conditions, the administration consider non-traditional forms of faculty compensation. Examples included having a percentage of hours working on a grant contribute to retirement if the work is done during the summer, and tuition rebates for employees of Virginia Tech who have a student attending the school or are themselves taking a class at Virginia Tech.

Due to Fall Break there will not be a meeting on November 22nd.

Minutes prepared by Catherine Martin,
Graduate Assistant, Office of the Provost

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Meeting November 8, 2002

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Jackie Davis, Leon Geyer, Richard Goff, William Greenberg, Sam Hicks, Pat Hyer, Andrew Jayne, Bob Tracy, Diane Zahm. Guests: Mel Gillespie, Doug Martin, Terry Wildman.

Zahm called the meeting to order with three items on the agenda: (1) Mel Gillespie to review the updated Faculty Search and Screening Process manual, (2) Doug Martin to discuss changes in regarding the sick leave/disability program for employees on VRS, and (3) Terry Wildman to review Faculty Handbook policies in relation to teaching and learning. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

Faculty Search and Screening Process

Mel Gillespie, Director of the Office for Equal Opportunity, introduced the updated Faculty Search and Screening Process Manual, which had been distributed in advance to commission members. Gillespie explained that the updated manual documents a search and screening process that has appropriate administrative controls in place, complies with legal standards, and provides important guidance for committees on carrying out their responsibilities. The current version incorporates a great deal feedback received over the last few months. The process has been expedited by eliminating EO Office approvals at several stages; an automated applicant tracking system will facilitate submission of paperwork when it is ready.

Hicks felt that it was important the search and screening process should be monitored after the search was completed and a person was hired, rather than during the process which would create more hurdles for the hiring department. Gillespie pointed out that a dynamic hiring process had been created; monitoring was maintained through the new revision with few controls other than those legally required. Other members felt that the process had been significantly streamlined with controls at the level of the dean's office rather than in EO and that variations needed to respond to disciplinary differences could be easily accommodated.

Greenberg suggested minor editorial changes to the document. In addition, he felt that the document needs to state that the Dean could not appoint someone who was not on the list of finalists recommended by the committee, thereby disregarding the recommendations of the committee and the wishes of the faculty. Geyer agreed with Greenberg and recommended that the role of the search committee needs to be valued to prevent complete disregard of the time and effort people have put into the hiring process. Hyer pointed out that the Provost supports the faculty role in the hiring process and that they would find a way to incorporate this suggestion in the next revision.

Geyer suggested that there needs to be a number of days assigned to each step in the process so that inordinate delays would not occur and good candidates lost. Gillespie suggested that there is a process already in place to expedite the process, however,

turnaround time is often dependent on the adequacy and completeness of paperwork received. The new online system should help move paperwork along when it needs to go to the EO office. The EO Office has established a goal of a 48-hour turnaround on paperwork processed through their office.

Zahm suggested that the tasks might be grouped as they naturally occur during the process, instead of listing so many separate steps. For instance, creating a checklist of what search committees need to do when they are ready to start the search, there would be another checklist for when they are ready to conduct interviews. Hyer suggested that a sample timeline could be included in the manual that would address what a search committee should be doing at certain stages in the search process.

Goff questioned the 'people of color' term used in the manual. Committee members discussed the inadequacy of most available terms – protected classes, minorities, individuals of color, underrepresented groups, and so on. These comments will be taken under consideration, however it is important that the affected individuals and groups are comfortable with the language in the manual; there is no perfect or simple term that adequately captures the complexity.

Zahm questioned whether the sample lawful interview question regarding prior convictions was legally correct, thinking that employers could ask only about felony convictions. Hyer and Gillespie said they would check the legality of the statement in the manual.

Zahm suggested that additional comments be sent to Hyer, Gillespie, and the Provost by November 22.

Changes in the sick leave/disability program for VRS members

Doug Martin reviewed critical changes that will occur in the sick leave/disability program for faculty members on VRS. The state will AUTOMATICALLY enroll faculty members in the Virginia Retirement System into the Virginia Sickness and Disability Plan (VSDP) in January 2003, UNLESS faculty members specifically opt OUT by November 30th. All affected faculty members should have received a packet. Those who have not yet responded will receive an e-mail reminder from the Benefits Office about the importance of carefully considering this matter and making a conscious choice either to retain their existing sick leave/disability program or to let the automatic conversion to VDSP occur. The existing sick leave program of six months of paid sick leave upon appointment, combined with the long term disability program for faculty, is an extremely good combination and it has served faculty members well who have needed this coverage for a serious illness or disability. VSDP should really only be of interest to faculty members who are very near retirement (2 or 3 years) who are in good health, and who would like to trade in their existing six months of paid sick leave for retirement credit. It is possible for faculty members who have accrued sick leave to use that sick leave for VRS credit. The VRS credit amounts to six months for those faculty who have the 1040 hours of sick leave.

Doug' s concern is how to make sure that affected faculty members understand that they need to return their option form in order to REMAIN enrolled in the current sick leave plan, particularly since the Thanksgiving holidays will reduce the number of days toward the end of the enrollment period (November 30). CFA members offered some advice on how to get the message out and reinforced the need to contact individuals who have missed the campus meetings or not read their packets by individual e-mail. Members expressed their appreciation to Doug for trying to make sure faculty were aware of this important change that will affect them unless they return the form indicating that they wish to remain in the existing sick leave program. Faculty members in the optional retirement program (such as TIAA-CREF) are NOT affected, only those on VRS.

Faculty Handbook sections regarding teaching and learning:

Terry Wildman, Director of CEUT, Department of Teaching and Learning, was asked by Zahm to review the portion of the Faculty Handbook that dealt specifically with teaching and learning (ch. 4) in order to determine if it was current and consistent with University goals related to instruction.

The instruction-related sections are generally up to date and provide good information, according to Wildman. However, he provided CFA with several points that they needed to consider for revision. In Section 4.5, related to the Grading System, Standards and Assessment, the faculty may want to consider if what is in the policy creates an environment conducive for student learning. The definition of an “A” grade is particularly problematic. Wildman also suggested that best practices related to assessment of student learning are not really reflected in the Handbook and there should be clear expectations that faculty members should learn and incorporate such best practices into their coursework. This is a professional responsibility.

Greenberg mentioned that the Handbook should reflect that the teaching environment has changed to include on-line learning and many modes other than the traditional lecture format. Zahm asked about the policy that related to the requirement for a final exam for every course, page 8, Section 4.6.3 [“Examinations are required at the end of every course unless an alternative evaluation has been requested in writing of the department head or chair and of the academic dean before the start of the term.”]. The history of the policy might have been to make sure students were not given all of their course final exams on the same day or during the last week of classes, thereby shortening the semester. Members of the CFA agreed that the policy should be changed to include “other appropriate measurements” as opposed to simply stating that a final exam was required. Wildman suggested that the CFA think about testing in relation to learning. One of the most important things that faculty members can do in relation to testing is to focus on whether tests are reliable and valid and make changes accordingly.

Geyer suggested that we need to reinforce the value of teaching within the University culture by building a far more extensive orientation or training program for new (and other) faculty. This system would include best practices in pedagogy. Tracy suggested that since the Faculty Handbook is viewed primarily as an employment and legal

document, perhaps a separate handbook on educational practices with an on-line component for consultation would be helpful. Greenberg suggested that an emphasis on teaching practices and the value of teaching needs to include tenured faculty as well.

Wildman directed CFA's attention to the Faculty Evaluation portion of the Handbook, section 4.10.2. He suggested that the CFA consider stronger language about multiple forms of assessment related to evaluation of faculty. Currently, the student role in faculty evaluation is only a form they fill out at the end of the semester. Zahm and Jayne discussed an expanded student role in faculty evaluation. Student evaluations remain useful and reliable instruments; the problem is relying SOLELY on student evaluations of teaching for evidence of teaching effectiveness.

Zahm suggested that more work needs to be done with Wildman's assistance. Wildman will send the CFA a critique related to the issues that he noticed in the Handbook. CFA members would separate the issues between policy and educational practices so that further discussion could continue at the next meeting. Policy recommendations will require discussion with the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies.

The next meeting will be December 13th.

Minutes prepared by Catherine Martin, Graduate Assistant, Office of the Provost, and Patricia Hyer

Commission on Faculty Affairs
January 24, 2003

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Leon Geyer, Richard Goff, Sam Hicks, Pat Hyer, Don Orth, Ray Plaza, Tim Pratt, Bob Tracy, Diane Zahm. Guest: Fain Rutherford

Zahm called the meeting to order with nine items on the agenda. Old business included: (1) Revisions to the policy on Faculty Commitment to the University, and (2) Update on the Faculty Search Manual. New Business included: (3) Tuition scholarship, (4) Cluster hires, (5) Protecting programs when someone is counseled out, (6) Legislative issues, (7) Revisions to the faculty handbook, (8) P&T Issues/standards, (9) Status of diversity at Virginia Tech. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

Revisions to the Policy on Faculty Commitment to the University

Hyer presented revisions to the Commitment policy based on comments from those who had reviewed it over the last several months. Relatively few comments were received and the proposed changes were minor. Hyer presented a formal resolution that will accompany the Commitment Policy; minor changes were suggested in the wording. A motion was made and approved by CFA to adopt the resolution and policy with minor changes as noted. The documents will be presented to the University Council.

Faculty Search Manual

Hyer updated the CFA on the current status of the Faculty Search Manual. Changes that were suggested by different committees reviewing the document had been made to the manual and they are under consideration by the President.

Tuition Scholarship

Plaza described the Employees' Spouse & Dependent Scholarship Program, a scholarship available to children or the spouse of employees of Virginia Tech. Recipients must be a first time student at Virginia Tech. Currently a \$500 scholarship is awarded to the individual for one year only. The President, along with past presidents of VT, have established an endowment fund for the program and made personal contributions. The campaign for employee donations to the scholarship fund usually begins in early May with a mailing to faculty and staff. The committee responsible for selecting recipients is looking for input on how to better market the scholarships due to the low number of applicants.

Cluster Hires

Zahm presented information regarding the way cluster hires are conducted at the University of Wisconsin. Cluster hires are based on an interdisciplinary focus and are a new trend in how campuses are conducting faculty hires. Members were interested in knowing more about how such hiring would work at Tech. Of particular concern was the issue of whether there would also be positions available to replace faculty to meet

traditional departmental needs or whether the only possibility for hiring would be through this mechanism. The lack of faculty positions to meet pressing needs will have an obvious further dampening effect on faculty morale.

Based on the comments, Zahm determined that cluster hires was an issue that the CFA needed to discuss in greater detail by inviting to an upcoming meeting someone knowledgeable about how and when Virginia Tech would proceed with this approach.

Language to protect programs when someone is counseled out

Geyer suggested that there should be language to protect the funding for a faculty position when that position is left open after an individual has been counseled out. Counseling out refers to the process of advising a probationary faculty member to seek a position elsewhere because their prospects for tenure were not strong. Geyer pointed out that in the current difficult budget situation, positions would very likely be taken away if a faculty member were counseled out. Yet the department was doing the right thing by making the difficult decision early. If the position cannot be retained by the department, then there is a strong incentive to tenure a poor or mediocre faculty member just to retain the position.

Hyer suggested that this was a financial management issue since budgets had to be reduced and the alternatives for the department could actually be worse. Codifying this in the Faculty Handbook would seem inappropriate, but the issue could and should be addressed with college management. Dr. McNamee previously stated his support for departments retaining positions that become vacant this way, although his remarks were not made in the context of recent severe budget reductions. Zahm suggested that the Senate officers put this item on their list to discuss at their regular meeting with the Provost.

Legislative Issues

Tracy presented Senate Bill No. 1191 that is before the General Assembly. He explained that Section H of the Bill provides that state employees receive 1 year of creditable service towards their retirement for each year that state employees do not receive a general salary increase. Tracy pointed out that this only benefits state employees who are enrolled in VRS and many faculty members at Virginia Tech are enrolled in optional retirement programs such as TIAA-CREF. The CFA agreed that this was a fairness and equity issue, although members were reluctant to stop eligible employees from receiving such a benefit if it were approved. It was decided the CFA should determine the status of the bill by checking with the legislative affairs office, and then determine how to effect draft legislation that continues to provide benefits to state employees in VRS without addressing those who are in other types of retirement programs.

Faculty Handbook

Due to time constraints among interested parties, the proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook have been deferred.

P&T issues and standards

Pratt raised the issue of whether there is excessive influence by some department heads on P&T committees, especially in large departments where faculty may not know each other. In some colleges, faculty members are not given the opportunity to meet with their departmental committees to speak on their own behalf. Geyer explained how his department handles the P&T process, which does allow the faculty member to meet with the committee. The issue may be college specific and need to be pursued at that level. If this needs university-level attention it will be brought back to CFA for further deliberation.

Status of Diversity at Virginia Tech

Rutherford provided information on the status of diversity initiatives at Virginia Tech. An April directive from the Attorney General warned that race-conscious programs at Virginia colleges and universities may now be suspect if based on a “remediation” rationale, which is no longer valid because of a recent settlement between the state and the Office of Civil Rights. This fall, members of the Boards of Visitors received letters from the Attorney General warning that they could be personally liable if a complaint or suit were filed about a race-conscious program that did not meet a standard of “strict scrutiny” and “narrow tailoring.” The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors charged the President with making sure all programs conformed to federal and state law and the Attorney General’s opinions. The President charged a committee with auditing all university programs that may have a race-conscious element and making a report to the Board at their meeting in March.

The next meeting will be February 14, 2003

Minutes prepared by Catherine Martin, Graduate Assistant, and Patricia Hyer, Office of the Provost

Commission on Faculty Affairs
February 14, 2003

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Sam Easterling, William Greenberg, Leon Geyer, Ray Plaza, Tim Pratt, Diane Zahm

Zahm called the meeting to order with two items on the agenda. Old business included: (1) Review of changes to the Employees' Spouse and Dependent Scholarship Program, (2) Review of current Promotion and Tenure Policies/Procedures. The motion to adopt the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting both passed.

Tuition Scholarship

Plaza presented changes in eligibility requirements that were made to the Employees' Spouse and Dependent Scholarship Program. The committee responsible for administering the scholarship is appointed by the President. Any changes made to the policies surrounding the Scholarship need to be approved by the four committees that report to the President, the CFA being one. Minor changes were suggested in wording. A motion was made and approved by CFA to adopt the policy with minor changes as noted.

Plaza then asked for input on how to better market the Scholarship. Several suggestions were made including: an email to all faculty and staff from the Provost, or an announcement in Faculty and Staff Senate meetings. Members also suggested the dollar amount awarded should be increased to make the scholarship more competitive. Plaza will report back to the CFA on whether the scholarship supplements other aid that the student is receiving or whether it becomes a part of the aid the student would have received otherwise.

Promotion & Tenure Policies/Procedures

Based on comments at previous meetings, Zahm determined that P&T Policies needed to be discussed in further detail by CFA. Upon reviewing the P&T policies, the CFA felt that there were several issues within the policies that need to be communicated to the University P&T Committee.

The CFA raised concerns over the feedback that probationary employees are receiving from their respective departments. Although P&T Policies address various aspects of reappointment, the policies do not adequately detail the reappointment process. The CFA is concerned about the consistency of feedback and guidance untenured faculty receive in relation to the P&T process.

The CFA also raised concerns about the lack of consistency in how evaluation procedures are applied across departments. Different departments use the standard of a "high level of general competence." Other departments use the standard of "excellence" in at least one area in combination with competence in two other areas.

Of concern to the CFA was wording within the policies that affords a great deal of departmental discretion over tenure decisions regardless of other standards for review.

For example, the P&T policies are written so that changes in departmental direction can be a factor in determining whether to recommend tenure. The CFA agreed that it is not appropriate to introduce the idea of a change in direction of the department for the first time as part of the review of an individual candidate for tenure. Consideration should be given well in advance, preferably during annual reviews and reappointment reviews, and well before someone has entered the final stages of tenure review.

The CFA raised the issue that some departments operate without a paper trail. The lack of documentation makes it difficult to show what an untenured person has been advised to do in relation to job performance or whether an individual has been counseled in regard to departmental direction.

Concerns were raised over the potentially influential role of the department head in the promotion and tenure process. Of particular concern were cases where the department head chairs the department P&T Committee and then also serves on the college P&T committee.

Composition of the University P&T committee needs to reflect recent university reorganizations.

The CFA felt several additional points needed clarification in order to be consistently carried out across departments. CFA's recommendations included clarifying whether the division of vote needed to be recorded, whether a super majority or simple majority vote is required before the college committee can recommend a candidate to the dean, what role peer and alumni evaluations play in the P&T process, and what departmental committee makes decisions in regard to who is not re-appointed.

Concern was raised over why teaching effectiveness was the only major portion of the candidates' dossiers that had a page limit.

Zahm will draft a memorandum to the University P&T Committee outlining the concerns of the CFA, and will circulate this for review and comment prior to the next meeting.

The next CFA meeting will be February 28, 2003. That meeting will include a discussion with Provost Mark McNamee on cluster hiring and other issues.

Minutes prepared by Catherine Martin, Graduate Assistant and Diane Zahm, Chair, CFA.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
February 28, 2003

Members attending: Rick Ashley, Sam Easterling, William Greenberg, Leon Geyer, Sam Hicks, Pat Hyer, Mark McNamee, Diane Zahm

Zahm called the meeting to order with six items on the agenda. Old business included: (1) Review of memo to University Promotion & Tenure Committee members. New business included: (2) Review of study-research leave, (3) Cluster hiring, (4) Maintaining funding in the department when an individual has been counseled out, (5) Update on the Faculty Search Manual, (6) UDP appointment process. The motion to adopt the agenda was passed. The minutes from the last meeting were passed with minor changes made.

Memo to University P&T Committee Members

CFA members discussed the draft memo to the University P&T Committee, which identifies several issues and editing changes for consideration in the current P&T policies. Several suggestions were made for minor changes in the memo and it was then approved to send forward to the University P&T Committee.

Study-Research Leave

A resolution concerning the payback period for Study-Research Leave was reviewed by the CFA. There are two programs of paid study leave for faculty members – Study-Research leave which provides one academic year of leave at half pay, and Research Assignment which provides one semester of leave at full pay. The Handbook states that the service repayment obligation for both types of leave are “twice the period of leave, with a minimum obligation of at least one academic year.” Thus, those on research assignment must return for one academic year, while those on study-research leave must return for two academic years. The resolution addresses the inequity of the obligation for the two types of leave.

After discussion, the CFA approved the resolution that would create a consistent one-year return service commitment for individuals on both types of leave. Section 2.15.3 of the Faculty Handbook would be revised accordingly.

Cluster Hiring

McNamee described the philosophy behind cluster hiring, which is a strategy to identify and advertise complementary new appointments to be recruited in one year or over several years in a broadly defined priority area. Generally, this would be an area of research or scholarship where the university wants to establish a presence or to add to already strong one, thereby making an immediate impact in the field. Some faculty expressed concern that traditional disciplinary needs may go unaddressed if cluster hiring is the only way that positions would be filled. McNamee emphasized that departments will continue to make decisions about their needs, and “regular” hiring will certainly be necessary to maintain the range of programs. There is NO expectation on his part that cluster hiring would replace all faculty hiring. Rather, it is a complementary strategy.

Ideas for cluster hires, either solicited or brought forward, would go before the relevant deans, who will need to invest available positions and resources in those priority areas. The coordinating councils would then recommend whether to proceed when the proposal crosses two or more colleges. Review by the coordinating councils would be used as a way to inform other colleges and the University about ideas under consideration. If university resources are needed, review by the coordinating council is a way to determine whether it reinforces University-wide initiatives and what priority the proposal should be given.

Greenberg questioned how rapid resources could be committed if the hiring process became more bureaucratic with several different groups needing to grant approval. McNamee emphasized that there needed to be buy in from those with the bulk of the resources available and that the coordinating councils are needed to give counsel on university investments. The deans will need to see cluster hiring as a productive process for hiring and meeting university initiatives if the strategy is going to achieve the benefits we hope for.

Ashley questioned to what extent a structure created by cluster hiring would have a life of its own in the event that the individuals hired did not actually end up collaborating together. McNamee responded that cluster recruitment is an impetus for greater interaction, but there is no requirement that a new center or institute be formed, or even that the individuals collaborate in their research. While collaboration is clearly an advantage in seeking large-scale grants in some disciplines, the university can achieve an acknowledged strength in a discipline by simply having a number of outstanding faculty members pursuing relatively independent research agendas related to a broad area. Their collective presence can attract students, create strong cognate areas in graduate programs, and so on, even if they are not actively collaborating on the bulk of their research, sponsored or otherwise. The opportunity and expectation for collaboration will operate differently based on the cultures of the various disciplines.

Members of the CFA questioned how often cluster hiring is done as a single department. The overall impression is that it is done across departments. McNamee explained cross-departmental clusters will certainly get more university-level attention. If one department wants to hire several new faculty members they do not need to create a cluster. On the other hand, Zahm reported that Urban Affairs and Planning has just advertised for a cluster in her department and the strategy was very helpful in thinking through their priorities and attracting a good pool of candidates.

Members questioned where faculty members in a cluster were housed in regard to reporting and the P&T process. McNamee explained the individuals hired become regular members of a department. Evaluation and promotion and tenure decisions would be made by the home department.

McNamee emphasized that the goal was to get outstanding people and there are many variations to the way a cluster can operate. He suggested it might be helpful to have someone from a university that has successfully implemented cluster hiring, such as the

University of Wisconsin, talk to the CFA. A memo to the deans and department heads that would explain the assumptions of cluster hiring might also be helpful. CFA agreed that such guidance on how to conduct cluster hires, the research expectations for cluster hires, and how cluster hires address teaching needs would be very useful.

Disposition of Positions in Cases Where a Faculty Member has been Counseled Out

Geyer asked McNamee to address the issue of the retention of the faculty position when individuals are counseled out. The threat of losing the position in such a case operates as a disincentive to make difficult non-reappointment decisions when performance is mediocre or below par. In difficult budget times, a faculty member who may not be performing well may be retained because the risk of losing the position altogether creates even greater problems for managing the departmental work load.

The CFA supported a positive message from the Provost to the deans, outlining where resources should be retained or reallocated based on the level at which the decision to not reappoint or to deny tenure is made.

Faculty Search Manual

Hyer reported the manual is in its final stages and will be shared with the Board of Visitors. The CFA requested that they view the Faculty Search manual before the end of the year.

UDP Appointment Process

Hyer asked CFA members to review the process for consideration of UDP or ADP appointments. Currently, the policy calls for the Provost to “rely primarily on the advice and counsel of CFA,” which would in turn invites the evaluation of other distinguished faculty. To operationalize this, the Provost has typically formed an ad hoc committee including the chair of CFA and three or four current UDPs and ADPs to conduct the evaluation of dossiers and make recommendations. All distinguished faculty members are also invited to review the dossiers and to submit written comments to the committee, and a number have done this. CFA members felt that this process seemed perfectly appropriate, and authorized Hyer to revise section 2.4.3 to reflect current practice. A retirement of one of the ADPs means that we will soon be announcing an opportunity to make nominations.

Submitted by

Catherine Martin, GA Office of the Provost,
and Patricia Hyer, Associate Provost

Commission on Faculty Affairs
March 14, 2003

Members attending: Rick Ashley, William Greenberg, Leon Geyer, Richard Goff, Sam Hicks, Patricia Hyer, Andrew Jayne, Ray Plaza, Timothy Pratt, Robert Tracy, Diane Zahm

Zahm called the meeting to order with three items on the agenda. New business included (1) Changes to health benefits, (2) Legislation related to optional retirement plans, (3) Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Health Benefits

Linda Woodard, Assistant Vice President of Personnel Services, informed the CFA about important changes to state employee health benefits that will take effect July 1, 2003. An email containing enrollment information will be sent to all employees mid-May, and faculty should watch for this information. Woodard directed individuals to visit www.dhrm.state.va.us which provides historic data and background information about what is driving changes to health benefits.

Optional Retirement Plan

Woodard described changes to §51.1-124 and §51.1-126, Code of Virginia, which were amended during the 2003 legislative session. SB849 allows Virginia's higher education institutions to either establish their own optional retirement plans, or use a plan administered by VRS. It would require an act of the General Assembly to leave the VRS program once that original decision had been made. Under SB 857, institutions could be charged administrative fees for the services VRS would provide.

VT must make a decision regarding the optional plans this spring or the university will automatically become a part of the VRS program. Personnel Services considered whether Virginia Tech employees would be better served through the VRS plan, and decided the university should continue with its own program. The university presently reviews and approves a list of vendors available to employees for their retirement portfolios.

Woodard asked for feedback from the CFA in relation to these recent changes. The CFA highlighted faculty concerns about the difference in benefits received from the defined benefit plans as compared with the individual contribution plans. The CFA asked if there was some way that the system would allow an individual to move between the two plans, since circumstances change as employees move through their careers. Additional concerns included: severance options, inequity to part-time faculty, and finding a way to use summer sponsored project contract hours to contribute toward retirement. The CFA also mentioned the use of social security numbers and its potential for identity fraud.. Woodard addressed this concern; the new Banner system would allow personnel services to move away from the use of social security numbers as identification numbers for faculty.

Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Hyer informed the CFA that the new Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity was approved by the Board of Visitors at its March meeting. The CFA will need to choose one person to serve on the new Commission.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
April 11, 2003

Members attending: Sam Easterling, William Greenberg, Leon Geyer, Richard Goff, Patricia Hyer, Ray Plaza, Timothy Pratt, Robert Tracy, Diane Zahm

Zahm called the meeting to order with four items on the agenda, including: (1) Research leave policy, (2) Modification to teaching policies found in the Faculty Handbook, (3) P&T Issues, (4) CFA representation on the new Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Research Leave Policy

A question was raised at University Council during the first reading of CFA resolution 2002-03B regarding the return-service obligation for those who request two non-consecutive semesters of Study-Research leave – that is do they owe one year after each semester, or only one year for the total leave period? All agreed that a consistent policy needed to be established, and Greenberg offered a suggestion to add “at the end of the approved leave” as a way to handle the split leave period. So if one semester constituted an approved research leave, then an individual would owe one year. If the initial leave request was approved for TWO non-consecutive semesters, then one year of service would be required at the end of the second semester. Time served BETWEEN the two approved semesters would not count toward the completion of the one academic year requirement.

The CFA moved to approve the Return-Service Obligation for Study-Research Leave Policy with clarification added regarding the time owed; it passed with one abstention.

Modification to Teaching Policies

A previous discussion with Terry Wildman at the CFA meeting held on November 8, 2002 revealed that several teaching policies found in the Faculty Handbook do not reflect current (or good) teaching practice. Based on that discussion, questions were raised about language in the following sections of the Handbook: Grading Systems, Course Grading, Class Attendance, Final Examinations, Final Grade Reports, Student Evaluation of Courses and Instructors, Other Evaluation of Courses and Instructors, Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, and Academy of Faculty Service.

Proposed changes to Section 4.5, Grading Systems, included defining how grades are assigned to students. The Faculty Handbook currently states that grades should be assigned in relation to other students. The CFA proposed the Handbook state grades are assigned based on achievement of learning objectives.

A change was approved to Section 4.6, Course Grading, adding language about the “use and application of valid and reliable measures” to ensure the technical quality of student performance when assigning grades.

The statement in Section 4.6.1, Syllabus and Performance Expectations, should be modified to include a reference to accommodations for students with disability and possibly links to appropriate syllabus language as provided on the Dean of Students site and for the Honor System. The CFA felt it was the responsibility of the individual departments to provide model syllabi to new faculty.

The CFA agreed the policies related to final exams and submission of final grades listed in Section 4.6.1, Section 4.6.3, and Section 4.6.8 needed further discussion. The policies should reflect current teaching practices in regard to distance learning environments and professors who employ something other than a 2-hour final to assess student performance. The CFA suggested a subcommittee may need to be created that would include representatives of CFA along with CUSP to examine the issue in greater detail.

After discussing proposed changes to Section 4.6.2, Class Attendance, the CFA agreed the policy should stand as currently written.

The CFA agreed Section 4.10.1, Student Evaluation of Courses and Instructors, should reflect expectations of the P&T Committee in regard to course evaluation. The P&T Committee expects to see evaluations of every course; the policy should be rewritten so faculty receive a consistent message. This would be a policy change that will need attention in the fall.

The CFA agreed Section 4.10.2, Other Evaluation of Courses and Instructors, needs to be rewritten so faculty are encouraged to include portfolios and examples of their teaching other than just student course evaluations.

The CFA approved changes made to Section 4.12.1, Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (CEUT), so that the current relationship with the Writing Program is appropriately stated. This is an editorial change and does not require any specific action.

The CFA discussed proposed changes to Section 4.15.2.4, Academy of Faculty Service. Currently, faculty are awarded a three-year appointment in the Academy. The CFA suggested the Academy could have an expanded role in campus governance if the appointment was for a longer term. Additional roles of the Academy could include leadership development in relation to campus governance issues such as college mergers.

CFA Representative for the CEOD

William Greenberg volunteered to serve as the CFA representative on the University Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

The meeting ended after the CFA resolved editorial changes to the Faculty Handbook should be made; the Provost's Office will handle these. Policy language and issues that concern both the CFA and CUSP should be circulated to both groups with points of further discussion highlighted. These issues would then be revisited in the fall.

The last meeting of CFA for spring term, scheduled for April 25th will be canceled, because of conflicts with Founders' Day activities.

Recorder,

Catherine Martin, Graduate Assistant
Office of the Provost