

**Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
February 12, 2010**

Members attending: Debbie Smith (acting chair), Jack Finney (for Dean Chang), Brad Klein, Carol Burger, Dennis Welch, Tami Watson, Ed Lener (for Bruce Pencek), Thomas Olson (for Dean Winistorfer), Sam Easterling, Michele McLeese, and Patricia Hyer

Guests: Jim McCoy, Chief of Staff, Facilities Services

Agenda for the meeting included three items: winter closing/facilities, consulting/outside employment, and special research faculty working group.

The minutes of the CFA meeting on January 29, 2010, were approved with changes.

Winter Closing/Facilities

Patricia Hyer reminded CFA members about the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs (CSPA) resolution to change Virginia Tech's holiday policy to reflect closing during the period between December 25 to January 1. The resolution had been presented to the Faculty Senate and questions were raised about mandatory annual leave usage, facilities closing, and energy cost savings.

Hyer noted many faculty members conduct work that is not bound to a physical office. If faculty members work off-site during the closing they are not required to report annual leave for the periods of actual work. Administrative and staff employees generally have less flexibility in this regard, but the resolution encourages supervisors to exercise some flexibility within existing alternative work policies.

Jim McCoy, Chief of Staff for Facilities Services, briefed CFA members about cost savings gained by strategically managing centrally controlled air handlers on campus during the most recent winter break (December 18, 2009 to January 19, 2010). There are approximately 350 centrally-controlled air handlers and Facilities Services shut down about half of them (170) for evenings, holiday closings, and weekends. Heat was restored for standard office hours during the three day period between Christmas and New Year's. Laboratories and computer server rooms were not affected. Building temperatures were monitored throughout the period and adjustments made as needed. These modest energy conservation measures saved the university \$300,000 in electricity costs and some fuel savings. The campus community was notified in advance of buildings to be affected, and Facilities Services worked through any adjustments that needed to be made to maintain critical operations in affected buildings. Additional savings could be significant by strategically managing more centrally controlled air handlers and closing facilities between holidays without restoring heat during the day time. McCoy also stated that physical plant administrators would be responsive when critical operations were identified that needed accommodation, however, the air handling systems do not allow for room-by-room control.

The discussion also clarified that a university closing refers to the close of offices, business operations, and classes. Decisions about particular facilities and the provision of heat and light during such closing is a separate, although related issue. A formal university closing would provide the opportunity to save even more energy and reduce

cost as strongly supported in the sustainability resolution approved last year by University Council and adopted by the Board of Visitors.

CFA members re-endorsed the resolution to close during winter break with the following additions:

- When appropriate, employees may work off-site with pre-approval by their supervisors. These employees would not report annual leave used for hours worked.
- Physical plant will work with departments to facilitate continuation of critical operations.

Consulting/Outside Appointment

Hyer asked CFA members for advice about outside employment for faculty members. Currently, full-time faculty members are not permitted to accept regular outside employment except that described under consulting policies. The goal of this policy was to ensure the primary commitment of faculty members is to their full-time appointments at Virginia Tech. University staff members are allowed to hold outside employment with permission from their supervisors. However, unlike faculty, non-exempt staff members are in positions that have a defined 40-hour work week. Other universities such as Stanford and Georgia Tech have policies that allow faculty members to hold outside employment with permission. CFA members agreed that the university's current prohibition against any outside employment may be too strong. Hyer will draft a new policy to permit faculty members to engage in outside employment and present it to CFA members.

Special Research Faculty Working Group

Cindy Wilkinson reported on a new working group established to explore personnel policies and practices for career researchers at Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech employs more than 600 special research faculty members whose primary responsibilities are to conduct research sponsored by external agencies. Virginia Tech invests in large research focused initiatives, such as the new Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, and supports established research institutes, such as the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. The goal of the institute model is to substantially increase Virginia Tech's competitiveness for externally funded research with the ultimate goal of increasing externally funded research expenditures. To meet these goals, and appropriately staff research programs, the numbers of special research faculty members are expected to increase substantially.

The working group is composed of administrators from the Office of the Vice President for Research, Virginia Bioinformatics Institute (VBI), the Fralin Life Sciences Institute, and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI). The working group will examine personnel policies and practices for career researchers at Virginia Tech, benchmark personnel policies and practices at other large research universities, inform Virginia Tech administrators about best practices, and identify opportunities for improvement at Virginia Tech.

Dr. Walters/Vice President for Research is forming a task force to explore special research faculty issues. The insights gleaned from the working group will inform the task force.

Recorder, Cindy Wilkinson