

**Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
April 23, 2010**

Members attending: Debbie Smith (acting chair), Jack Finney (for Dean Chang), Sam Riley, Tami Watson, Bruce Pencek, Drew Marrs, Carol Burger, and Patricia Hyer

Guests: Tracey Cameron, Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration

Agenda for the meeting included three items: study on tenure outcomes by faculty cohort, update on university committee to evaluate teaching, and potential CFA topics for 2010-11.

The minutes of the CFA meeting on April 9, 2010, were approved without change prior to the meeting by email.

Study on Tenure Outcomes by Faculty Cohort

Tracey Cameron briefed CFA members about the faculty cohort study she has been working on with Patricia Hyer. The purpose of the study was to analyze tenure outcomes of cohorts of new assistant professors at Virginia Tech and, where relevant, to understand why pre-tenure faculty members were leaving Virginia Tech prior to tenure review. Cameron presented several key findings about faculty hiring trends, faculty composition, voluntary departure, and issues of work/life balance. About 64% of those who were hired as assistant professors between fall 1998 and fall 2005 achieved tenure; 7% were not reappointed during the probationary period or denied tenure; 26% left the institution voluntarily; about 2% remained at the university but in non-tenure-track roles. Women were twice as likely as men to leave the institution prior to a tenure review (38% for women compared to 19% for men). Black faculty often left for multiple reasons, both personal and professional. The authors analyzed the impact of tenure achievement of faculty members who have stopped the tenure clock noting that revised policies may result in lower female faculty member departure rates. The authors concluded that recruitment and retention of women and ethnic/racial minority faculty members continue to present challenges and that it is critical to address disparities that lead to lost talent.

CFA members commended Cameron and Hyer for their study and commented on the results. Many believed the findings of this study will reassure some junior faculty about the tenure process and de-stigmatize the use of Virginia Tech's "stop the clock" policy. Hyer asked CFA members for suggestions about how to disseminate the results. Members suggested briefing the Faculty Senate, posting an executive summary to the VT News webpage, and summarizing the results in the Advance VT newsletter.

Update on University Committee to Evaluate Teaching

Sam Riley updated CFA members on the ongoing work of the committee to revise student evaluations of teaching. Three subcommittees have been formed to address the specific issues of instructor evaluation: student perception of instruction (SPOI) revision, peer observation of teaching, and self-assessment of teaching. The goal of the SPOI committee was to develop a new SPOI instrument and process to be administered electronically. The implementation timeline includes a pilot of 50 courses in spring 2010, a larger pilot of one college in fall 2010, and university-wide adoption by spring 2011.

The proposed SPOI instrument includes six standard items, a pool of optional items, and two open-ended questions about improved learning. The first six questions are the meat of the SPOI and will be used to calculate a mean to potentially replace the “overall” rating item. The former overall rating will be included in the pilots and statistical analyses will provide insights into the validity of using a mean to replace the overall rating. CFA members commented about specific questions and the proposed process. Riley noted that the SPOI is an experiment and will be adjusted based on pilot results.

The other two subcommittees are making progress. The goal of the peer observation of teaching subcommittee is to develop a new peer observation process. The goal of the third subcommittee is to develop a new process for self-assessment of teaching. Elements of both the peer and self-assessment processes will be designed to focus on continuous improvement, scale from entry level to highly integrated, use results for both formative and summative purposes, enhance training, and use electronic tools to foster reflective and integrative development. Both processes are slated to be piloted in fall semester 2010 and made available university-wide in spring 2011.

Potential CFA Topics for 2010-11

- Clarifying year of eligibility for study-research and research assignment leaves.
- Issues around consulting and conflict of interest
- Periodic updates on progress on evaluation of teaching issues
- COACHE survey results
- Updates on Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute
- Mandatory conversions from CY to AY
- Promotion and continued appointments process for the library and extension faculty

Recorder, Cindy Wilkinson