

**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**Minutes**  
**February 5, 2016**

**Members Attending:** Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Rodney Irvin, Jack Davis, Deborah Good, Sally Beth Johnson, Velva Groover, Greg Amacher, Wat Hopkins, Ann Zajac, Joe Merola

Guests: Ken Eriksson, Ellen Plummer

The Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) meeting was called to order by Montasir Abbas (Chair), who identified the following agenda items:

- a. Approval of Minutes
- b. Discussion of Upcoming Items This Semester
- c. Ombuds Proposal
- d. Institutes
- e. Any other business

1. Approval of Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes was brought forward by the chair. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Discussion of Upcoming Items This Semester

There is a handout on the scholar site listing upcoming items for the CFA this semester. The handout was shared with President Sands and Provost Rikakis. Upcoming Items include: (a) Ombuds Proposal; (b) Governance (which has passed university council); (c) Institutes; and (d) Promotion and Tenure Guidelines.

There was a brief discussion surrounding the promotion and tenure guidelines. The discussion centered around using alternative metrics rather than Journal Impact Factor (JIF) in evaluating promotion and tenure cases. There was a comment about how to move departments away from simply using top journals as a guide for promotion and tenure. Many departments do not use JIF but may list top journals and tell faculty they need to publish in them.

There was an additional comment about measuring impact. For example, the work of the Flint water research team may not show up on QS rankings, but obviously had a major impact. It will show up on Altmetrics. A final comment was mentioned that this conversation is part of a charge from President Sands who wishes for the promotion and tenure guidelines to be broadened. They should not to focus on any one metric. It is for faculty to explain how their work is making an impact. It is a way to broaden the conversation.

## Ombuds Proposal

Guest Ken Eriksson made a presentation about the proposal for an ombuds. Details of the proposal can be found on the scholar site.

Eriksson began by providing context for the proposal. In the spring, there was a proposal to review the Senate Committees on Reconciliation, Ethics, and Review. The review committee found that the present structure is inefficient because people do not know where to go to find support. There is a need to simplify the structure and have one “go-to” person. Additionally, each committee is becoming increasingly difficult to fill. The workload for the Committee on Reconciliation can be very high. So the work falls on a few individuals. The review committee proposed to create a central office headed by an ombuds. It would replace the work that Ken Eriksson has been doing. He has spoken with Dean Karen DePauw and she is open to integrating the graduate ombuds to this office. President Sands expressed concern that staff do not have an ombuds.

The proposed faculty ombuds proposals consists of a Faculty Ombuds, an Intake staff person, and Ombuds team. Ombuds are common at many universities. They are at more than 200 universities, including many institutions in Virginia. The ombuds program appears to be in high demand at UNC-Chapel Hill. They have three people working in this capacity.

The ombuds would help faculty, graduate students, and administrators solve workplace problems, and give generic feedback to administration on matters of general concern. The position will report to the president. An ombuds would be a sounding board for faculty, consult with university officials, and direct people to other resources on campus. An ombuds would not make decisions for anyone, offer any legal advice, offer psychological counseling, testify in court, put the university on notice of claims, or serve as an advocate for any individual or entity. An ombuds is a person in a position to work with two parties. It is not a counselor. It is trying to narrow the differences between the two parties.

In April 2015 the faculty senate voted unanimously to support this proposal. The taskforce met separately with President Sands and Vice Provost Jack Finney. The next step is for the CFA to establish a resolution for the position for the fall. The person would be a part-time, 25% position. In the long term, the goal would be to hire an outside person. Faculty would vote on the resolution on Feb. 27. The resolution will then go to University Council. This is not a done deal. There are many stakeholders including the President, the Provost, Vice Provosts and Deans. This concluded the presentation and questions were invited from the members of the committee.

The first question was whether the ombuds would be under the same confidentiality rules as faculty members. Eriksson answered yes, although there are exceptions to

confidentiality including sexual harassment, misuse of public funds, and a situation where a minor is harmed.

There was another question regarding clarification of the phrase “gathering information” under the description of what the ombuds does and whether this involves “investigating.” Eriksson said that when a person approaches him, he asks them to tell their story. That is gathering information. The person has to give him permission to talk with other people about the matter. In about 50% of cases, the person does not want him to do anything and just wants to talk.

A member of the committee then asked Eriksson if the success of the position would be measured by President Sands. Eriksson answered that the professional standard for ombuds is that they report to the highest level of the university. The president would determine the success of the program. Vice Provost Finney added that we can learn about how the ombuds process has worked at other universities. The president may determine that a small group review these cases. This group could track how many grievances the university has. It is highly unlikely that the President would do it himself. But the goal is to move it from under the provost’s office so it is independent of the chief academic officer.

An additional question regarded serving graduate students and staff in the office. Vice Provost Finney stated that we will start with faculty and see if it works before extending it. There is a logistical problem with staff. There are two classifications of staff. There are classified staff who have their own guidelines and require separate changes. Eriksson followed up by stating that the discussion about the creation of the position was sparked from cases where no one knew where to go. An ombuds is someone at the very least who can direct them where to go. If it does turn out that we don’t know how to handle cross-category issues, there may be a need to expand or not. There was an additional comment about the benefit of having the graduate and faculty ombuds in the same office.

There was a final question about whether this proposal would require changes to the faculty handbook. Vice Provost Finney stated that rather than change everything, we will consider a resolution to override current policy to allow for a trial period with an ombuds. Board approval will come from the handbook changes. We are not going to change all of the policies until we know that it works. This would also include changes to the faculty senate guidelines. There will also need to be further discussion about including A/P faculty.

With no further comments or questions, Eriksson departed the meeting.

### 3. Institutes

The Commission on Faculty Affairs will discuss concerns about whether the university's seven institutes are working with departments and faculty to achieve the goals of the university. Chair Abbas has created a survey to send to members of the faculty senate, who could forward it to anyone who they believe will provide useful information. The survey is about faculty experiences with the institutes. It is open-ended and asks participants to describe experiences as either "Excellent," "Good," "Bad," or "Very Bad."

There was a question about if the survey will only go to the people who have a problem with the institutes. Can the avenue for distribution go through the institutes, or the VP of research so it doesn't look like one institute is sending it out? Abbas answered that the goal of the survey is to address these issues. It is not to evaluate the institutes. There was a suggestion to ask senators to send it their departments so all faculty could receive it. The thought was that good suggestions may also provide improvements. It was decided that the survey will be sent to the senators who will send it out to faculty members in their departments.

There was an additional question about creating general questions to accrue numerical data. Abbas said he did not want to create predefined areas. He wanted to leave it open for responses. There were additional comments about receiving more input for the survey. Vice Provost Finney indicated that the new Vice President of Research and Innovation may want to evaluate the institutes. This survey is not about evaluating the institutes.

There was a suggestion to change "Bad" and "Very Bad" to "Unsatisfactory" and "Highly Unsatisfactory." There was another suggestion only have two categories rather than four. There was a final suggestion to use the language about "successes" and "problems."

Chair Abbas stated that he will take this as an initial start and seek additional feedback.

### 4. Any Other Business

There was a presentation from Vice Provost Finney titled, "Faculty Composition and Responsibilities to Achieve University Goals (Draft Proposal)".

Current goals of the university include the following:

1. Enhance reputation for outstanding research and scholarship
2. Provide high quality instruction for growing student body
3. Enrich inclusivity in research and scholarship
4. Offer faculty multiple ways to contribute and excel

Currently, the institution has four types of faculty: Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty, Non-tenure-track Instructional faculty, Research Faculty, and Administrative and Professional Faculty

There is a proposal for the introduction of the Collegiate Professor Series. These faculty members would have the following four attributes:

1. Non tenure-track instructional faculty appointment
2. Promotion through teaching excellence, scholarship, and professional development
3. Terminal degree
4. Tailored teaching, research, and service/outreach responsibilities based upon department needs

They would also have the following titles:

Collegiate Assistant Professor – 3-year contract, renewable,  
Collegiate Associate Professor – 5-year contract, renewable  
Collegiate Professor – 7-year contract, renewable

The goal is to have a cadre of faculty who could teach at multiple levels. They could also be engaged in research. This would allow departments and colleges to have increased flexibility.

There was some concern from committee members that this would create a two-tiered system between those faculty members that have a high research profile and those that do not. Vice Provost Finney said that what is provided is a distinct category for non-tenure-track instructional faculty. This allows departments to meet the demand of increased number of classes, free up research faculty to research more, and to attract highly visible scholars. It does not hamper a department's ability to meet teaching demands and it brings in people who are highly committed to teaching.

There was a question about whether it would be better to give the departments the faculty positions and let them figure out how to work this out. Vice Provost Finney stated we currently do this. Departments have the right to determine teaching loads. This proposal provides a tool for departments to have someone teach core classes, and attract them with a new label where we may not be able to attract them with a clinical or instructor title. The professor of practice title can return to what it was intended to mean. It is meant for people with real professional experiences who provide their professional expertise where appropriate. This is popular in architecture, business, and performing arts. The other part of this proposal is to formalize a process so that faculty could propose their goals and evaluation metrics. This would allow faculty to come to an agreement with their dean and department head to have a tailored assignment. A faculty would be rewarded for the outcomes that they achieved. Some universities are doing this so there will be benchmarks.

There was a concern that faculty will need to be convinced that there is a tangible reward system. There was a second concern centered around a belief that teaching is enhanced by having research scholars in the classroom. This concern was thought to be particularly relevant in the with the new Pathways program where the collegiate faculty may not be prepared to meet the demands of this curriculum. Vice Provost Finney said the institution has already made the shift to non-tenure-track faculty. So the question is if we are best served by having people committed to this process and free up people to do more research.

There was a question about why it would not be better to bring in more tenure-track faculty? Vice Provost Finney stated that if we did this, colleges will struggle to meet their teaching demands. You cannot get highly visible scholars with high teaching loads. If the institution follows this path, it will get behind in teaching loads.

There was an additional question about whether this is creating a two-tiered system. Can we create a more equitable system?

There was a comment in support of the proposal because it allows for a more market-based approach and the possibility to compete with elite institutions for highly visible faculty. There was a final question about what type of faculty would be attracted to fill these positions.

The discussion ended and this topic will be brought up at the next meeting.

### Adjournment

There were no additional items discussed, the meeting was adjourned

Recorder, Ryan Rideau