

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
March 4, 2016

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Anne Zajac, Wat Hopkins, Jim Spotila, Philip Young, Greg Amacher, John Ferris, Velva Groover, Deborah Good

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

- a. PT guidelines discussion
- b. Collegiate faculty proposal/resolution
- c. Any other business

1. PT guidelines discussion

This was a continuation of previous discussions surrounding the use of journal impact factor (JIF) in the promotion and tenure guidelines. Philip Young led this discussion. Young presented a revised description of the promotion and tenure guidelines. This description included a qualitative assessment of journal articles including media coverage and effect of public policy. The description also includes examples. Additionally, there is a section for qualitative assessment regarding the journal itself.

At previous meetings, there was a sense that guidelines should continue to use “the impact factor of the journal” as a factor, but to allow for additional measures. Young encouraged the group to remove this clause in order to be in concert with broader scholarly communities. Young also noted that there is evidence that high quality articles are not in high impact journals. Young concluded the presentation and solicited comments from the commission.

In the discussion, Abbas indicated that he does not mind deemphasizing JIF, but eliminating it may cause problems because some current faculty members may be using this metric as a means to earn tenure. It may not be fair to change these rules. He suggested that it remain an option. Zajac expressed similar concerns. She noted that the commission can say JIF no longer carries the weight it once did. She stated that departments should allow ways to show qualitative assessments such as those provided in the examples.

Hopkins questioned if the research about the utility of JIF cuts across all disciplines. Young could not recall this information but offered to send out articles to commission members after the meeting. Hopkins said if there is strong evidence that JIF is not valid, it should be eliminated. But if there are faculty who are working under these guidelines for tenure, we should delay it for a new group of faculty.

Spotila asked if the research showing that JIF is not valid is about the person or the journal. Young stated that the papers show that highly cited papers are more widely dispersed across journals. You could have widely cited papers in lower tiered journals. The goal is to have articles measured on their own merits, not on the journal.

Zajac expressed concern for those faculty in smaller departments. For example, she said that she is in a small discipline. Her work and others in her department will never be high in terms of these metrics because her field is so small.

Amacher agreed with others who wished to deemphasize JIF in the promotion and tenure guidelines. However, he is sensitive to the ways people have been using it to guide careers, so maybe a transition is the best approach. He expressed concern that Google Scholar metrics are different than Web of Science. He also expressed concern that there are ways that individuals may manipulate the system.

Abbas wanted to make clear that he does not like how much attention is given to JIF in the promotion and tenure guidelines. However, he did state it may signal some excellence in some fields. He believes we should make clear that it is not the only way to measure excellence.

There were questions around formatting. Amacher noted that the type of information for the qualitative assessment usually goes in the candidate statement, so he is unsure how this information will be used. Spotila asked if these qualitative assessments should come after each article or as a summary. Young stated he has seen it both ways. Amacher noted that this could be a lot of work if someone has many articles. Ferris suggested that departments take responsibility for the qualitative evaluation of work.

At this point, Hopkins asked if a vote should be taken about the proposal. Finney noted that the last university promotion and tenure committee meeting is on March 31. He suggested that the CFA do minor edits that downgrade the significance of JIF for now. He and Theresa Mayer, Vice President for Research and Innovation, have been tasked with determining better ways to measure the impact of faculty research. He stated that they will need faculty input and buy-in on this process. More substantive changes will be made then.

Young agreed to make edits that deemphasize JIF but keep it as an option. He will send this out electronically to members of the CFA. A final decision will be made at the next CFA meeting.

2. Collegiate faculty proposal/resolution

Finney presented the resolution to establish the classification of collegiate faculty.

Abbas shared feedback regarding the proposal from members of the faculty senate. The faculty senate is in the process of collecting feedback from faculty in their departments. They are being asked to bring all of their feedback to their next meeting on March 15. Abbas presented feedback he has received to date.

In the feedback, some members expressed some positives of the proposal. The first positive point is that it would allow the university to grow undergraduate enrollment with research funding. Secondly, it would reduce the burden of growth on tenured and tenure-track faculty.

There were several cons noted about the proposal. These included the following:

- Expectations are not much different from tenured and tenure-track faculty without expectation of tenure.
- Why is there an expectation of research within these positions?
- This will create a two-tiered system of faculty that has led to problems at other universities.
- What are the implications in terms of graduate student supervision?
- Tenured faculty will be valued almost exclusively for research.
- Resource competition among departments.

Additional concerns and questions were expressed.

- Must not be a path against tenure (number of collegiate faculty should be capped)
- "I want to make sure that I have the default option of staying in my tenured and/or tenure-track position". (There is concern that some departments might strong arm some faculty into switching classifications).

To this last concern, Finney expressed that if someone has tenure, the university cannot take it away. There is no option for tenured faculty to move into a collegiate faculty position. There is an option to tailor responsibilities. If a dean or department chair believes someone can make a great contribution exclusively teaching, they can tailor a responsibility for that. This already exists so it will not be a part of the proposal. There is a difference for tenure-track faculty. If a tenure-track faculty member is receiving poor feedback after their second and fourth years but high teaching evaluations, they may choose to move into a collegiate faculty position. He said he is unsure how to put safeguards in the proposal regarding this point because the alternative is that the faculty member will not be tenured.

Hopkins said this proposal is in context of the Provost wanting to raise research expectation. So there is a fear that if you are not meeting those expectations, you will be moved into a collegiate faculty position. But if a department does not have the

funding, they cannot just move a faculty member into collegiate faculty position because they do not want to lose a researcher.

Amacher said that he has heard the fear that this is a zero sum game and that this proposal will take away from the numbers of tenured faculty, leading to the tenure process becoming tighter. He asked who will control the initial appointment of these faculty members? To answer this question Finney said when collegiate faculty are hired, they are appointed to a department. Whatever process for hiring is currently used by departments, he would not suggest changing it. Collegiate refers to the fact that they are only in colleges, not institutes or the Division of Student Affairs. They will have academic homes. Research faculty do not always have academic homes.

Zajac expressed concern about the evaluation and promotion process for collegiate faculty. The current language is brief and there is no specification about who determines reappointment. In her department, there are faculty who went from research faculty positions to clinical faculty positions without much change in their jobs. When it comes to reappointment, there is no guidance. Finney indicated that he has not edited the reappointment description and is seeking suggestions. Zajac said that because of the nature of collegiate faculty work, there needs to be a process. Finney said differential assignments need to be described. Many collegiate faculty members may have breakdowns such as 75% teaching, 20% scholarship or curricular transformation, and 5% service. Research will only be a small part of their position.

Hopkins expressed that the language that they can do research, but there is no expectation of an extensive research profile is confusing. In his department, they have some instructors who have research expectations and others that do not. They evaluate them on a 5-point scale, where 3 is meeting expectations of research. For faculty with no research expectations, they automatically receive a 3.

Abbas stated that if collegiate faculty have 20% research appointments, but do not have access to start-up funds, their research will flounder. This will lead them to be stressed. Finney agreed with this point. He said that the only change in this proposal is a new labeling system. There are currently three categories of non tenure-track faculty. The goal of the proposal is to empower this group by giving them more stability, longer contracts, and to promote teaching. Part of the motivation for this proposal is that students are not doing well in introductory classes.

Spotila indicated that right now, the numbers of non tenure track faculty members are small. The concern is that this number will really grow. Finney believes the percentages will shift. But there will be growth in all categories. There is already a commitment to 125 new tenured and tenure-track faculty. The university has 5,000 new students coming. If the numbers of collegiate faculty members does not grow, tenured and tenure-track faculty will have increased teaching loads. After the last meeting, he looked at putting caps on the percentage of collegiate faculty, but could not come up with a

number that makes sense. Some colleges have 75% tenure and tenure track faculty members, while others are close to 50%.

Abbas suggested that it will be helpful to know where we are now, and where we envision going. If the faculty know that we will never go below a certain value, that may help. Finney responded that there isn't a number that cuts across colleges. Such a suggestion would put the provost in charge of hiring, which is not desirable. Currently, deans have strategic capability to determine how to grow departments. Abbas indicated that his suggestion was made as a way to prevent collegiate faculty from being the majority of faculty members. It may alleviate some concerns of faculty.

Ferris stated there may be some concern from faculty about why the provost's office is proposing this classification. He said that it should be explained to current faculty that 5,000 more students are coming, and not having collegiate faculty will result in higher teaching loads. Current faculty would still teach because it is important to bring current research into the classroom. It should be made more explicit that this proposal is made to encourage stronger teaching and research across the university. He said that maybe having a cap is unrealistic, but suggested a phrase such as the number of new collegiate faculty may not increase more than number of tenured and tenure track faculty. Zajac indicated that this suggestion needs to include all non tenure-track classifications. Ferris responded that his suggestion was not a final solution, but some way to deal with this in terms of public relations.

Hopkins indicated that if the Provost is trying to reduce tenured and tenure-track faculty and increase the research profile of the university, this does not make sense because the goals do not match up. Abbas said that the message needs to be clear that if the university is going to have more students, we have to have collegiate faculty. Some faculty will naturally be against this.

Amacher reiterated the point that it would be beneficial to have some language about evaluation. He expressed concern about the process. Finney responded that current instructors do have a process if they wish to be promoted to senior or advanced instructors.

At this point, Abbas interjected with more concerns from the faculty senate. These concerns included the following:

- GTA funding: they do not want to have GTA funding replaced with collegiate faculty.
- If collegiate faculty's focus is teaching but they don't have tenure, they may be fearful and not take risks because their contract may not be renewed.

Amacher expressed some concern about the first point, noting that sustaining GTA funding may not be consistent with larger university goals. Abbas replied that the concern is not that it would reduce the level of funding, but that the funding will

disappear because some departments receive significant money from GTA positions. These departments teach a great number of service courses for the university. Additionally, support for GTA's has an impact on the graduate students themselves and graduate education. Without this funding, departments may not be able to support their graduate students. Teaching helps the students become better instructors for when they enter faculty positions. Ferris supported this notion by stating that GTA funding helps to bridge gaps in resources for lab support as well. Having a GTA funding provides for continuity of research.

Finney asked where the notion of losing GTA funding came from. Abbas indicated that this came from a statement from the provost. Finney responded that he thinks you would have collegiate faculty teaching at the 3000 and 4000 levels. It was never the intention to get rid of GTA positions. The proposal is saying that when the bulk of teaching is done by GTA's this may be part of a quality issue.

At this point, the discussion concluded. Abbas indicated that this does not serve as the first reading of the proposal. Faculty senate members will provide detailed feedback at their meeting on March 15th. Abbas will provide their full feedback at the next meeting. The committee will try to move this resolution through governance by the end of the academic year.

3. Any other business

No other business was discussed.

Adjournment

There were no additional items discussed, the meeting was adjourned

Recorder, Ryan Rideau