

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
March 18, 2016

Members Attending: Montasir Abbas (Chair), Jack Finney, Deborah Good, Jim Spotila, Jack Davis, Philip Young, Anne Zajac, Joe Merola

Guests: Rachel Gabriele, Ellen Plummer

- a. Collegiate faculty resolution edits
- b. P/T guidelines discussion
- c. Any other business

1. Collegiate faculty resolution edits

Abbas led a presentation about feedback received from the faculty senate regarding the collegiate faculty resolution. Abbas summarized feedback into a table that is available on the scholar site. The biggest concern was regarding a perceived threat to tenure. Faculty senate members suggested potentially having a percentage cap on the number of collegiate faculty members to resolve this issue. A second concern was about the allocation of GTAs. The faculty senate suggested giving the option to departments to determine the use of GTAs and/or collegiate faculty. A final concern was about the connection between teaching and research. Members of the faculty senate expressed a belief that the integration of all three aspects of work provide value. They argued that upper level courses should be taught by research faculty. There were additional questions about the role of the Provost in determining GTAs and collegiate faculty

Finney voiced concerns that there appears to be an idea that the provost's office is more involved in hiring than it is. Departments determine who will teach courses. Abbas said some of these concerns are legitimate, but other concerns can be managed by addressing previous comments.

Good thinks there is a valid concern about how the proposal cements instruction as secondary to research. She noted that this is something that the university has struggled with particularly in terms of the tenure and promotion process. She expressed concern that this could further undermine recent gains in this area. Abbas said that there are two concerns related to this. One is that collegiate faculty should not be asked to do research. A second is about making a path for tenure for them if they are producing research at a high level.

Abbas asked for clarification if the motivation for the proposal is about meeting the demand of increased enrollments, rather than shifting research faculty descriptions. Finney indicated that it is both. He said if a department increases capacity by bringing in collegiate faculty, and this allows for a teaching reduction for a faculty member to focus

on a big research project, this would be part of the motivation. It goes hand-in-hand with the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with variable teaching loads. Good indicated that there is confusion about what defines a teaching load and pondered if we should codify this. Finney, said the general notion for tenured and tenure-track faculty, is that the MOA will codify responsibilities for a period of time. It is expected that promotion and tenure committees will understand the assignment and make recommendations appropriate for the responsibilities. Good said that with collegiate faculty coming, we need to define what a teaching load is. Davis indicated that this should be at the department and college level. Finney responded that if a department/college were to hire a collegiate faculty member, they could determine their role and process. This happens in the faculty merit process, where deans and department heads must explain their decisions. There are checks and balances in the system. He added that in regards to tenure, there is no rank that is precluded from moving to a tenure-track position. This is no different. If a collegiate faculty member has done work that is on par with tenure-track requirements, there are mechanisms to move them to the tenure-track. Likewise, physics has a long history of physics education research. They can bring in a tenure-track position for this if they choose. There is a notion that faculty are being channeled into the collegiate faculty ranks, which is not true. It is tool for the departments. If people are here already, and they do not want collegiate faculty in their departments, they don't have to bring them in. However, he thinks there will be departments that need people that focus on these instructional points.

Abbas said there are concerns because these positions have little protection, they will not be able to do their jobs without a fear of being fired. Zajac said this appears to be a concern. Right now, there is not a lot of language about this in the handbook. Non tenure-track faculty tend to feel more vulnerable. Because they are only getting a 3-year appointment, they may be less likely to freely express their ideas. This is a concern for teaching, but also for their commitment to the college. Abbas indicated that we need some type of language about this issue. Spotila suggested including language about termination and performance. Abbas said the language should be open, and possibly list situations when someone could not be rehired. Good noted the difficulty in distinguishing between academic freedom and unprofessional conduct. Finney and Davis both echoed this concern saying it is hard to create language to address this. Abbas agreed, but noted that the larger concern is about trying to protect academic freedom.

Abbas brought up a concern about having research as a part of the description for collegiate faculty. Many expressed a sentiment that having research as a part of their job is unfair. A department head said if you put a research requirement in their job, we need to give them time to do research.

Abbas brought up another concern from the faculty senate expressing a lack of clarity about the motivation of the proposal. Spotila and Finney noted that this is explicit in the proposal.

Additional concerns included the following: language that protects excellent instructors; ensuring faculty are not strong-armed by chairs; potentially creating more service for tenured and tenure-track faculty; the hiring and appeals process; why time as a collegiate faculty member would not count if they are converted to the tenure-track; what measures will be in place to ensure new unit leaders would not replace collegiate faculty? In regards to the last concern, Good indicated that department heads change things all the time. Abbas said this concern comes from the thought that a change in leadership may result in altering in the evaluation process. Davis said that a department head would not do this single-handedly. There is a review before this can actually happen. Abbas asked if a department head does not like collegiate faculty members, could they get rid of them? Good mentioned that the reasoning for this has to be based in some reality. Finney said these concerns stem from the idea that there are no checks and balances in the system or within the department. Department heads are reviewed by deans. If a department head does not like someone who is doing well, the dean can check them. Department committees are voices for the faculty voice to express concerns. There are few spaces that someone can single-handedly do this. Zajac responded saying it is important that the senators work in their departments to make sure these practices are in place.

Abbas mentioned that the concern about GTAs was a major point for the faculty senate. Merola said there has been a lot of confusing rhetoric. For example, there is some language about wanting to use collegiate faculty instead of GTAs. He said he thinks there are policy and practice implications. He thinks most people are concerned about the practices. For example, his department use GTAs in labs, but collegiate faculty would not be able to do this. Finney highlighted how the Provost has said we are out of balance with our college peers in terms of GTA assignments. He would like to see colleges move towards a balance between GTAs and GRAs. When you benchmark against other colleges, there is a discrepancy. When talking about collegiate faculty, he did say that would mean less GTAs as instructors of record. He did not mean lab classes. He meant more didactic classes. It is when your faculty counts are low enough that you are dependent upon GTAs to fulfill your teaching responsibilities that this is an issue. Lab classes got wrapped in, but it is really about instructors of record. In lab classes, GTA are not instructors of record.

Spotila asked if there is a statement in the proposal that departments have authority over hiring practices. Finney indicated that there is explicit language in the resolution. Merola indicated that the statement is fine, but it does not completely eliminate concerns of the faculty. Abbas asked for clarification of how hiring works. Specifically, he asked if departments are given a lump sum and if they are able to use it how they

way. Davis responded that this is correct. However, if there is a new faculty line, there needs to be justification for this.

Merola asked if there is still a goal to increase graduate enrollments. Finney said he was not sure. That goal was set under the past administration. He thinks that the larger goal of 39,000 students may include more graduate students.

Davis asked when will this proposal go to University Council. Finney said it depends on how quickly the group has its 1st and 2nd reading. There are two more meetings, but he is not sure about how to have further discussions. Merola said the discussions do not have to happen in CFA. He expressed a desire to learn where this model has been used and how they have worked. Finney said it has been used at Purdue and Carnegie Mellon. Zajac asked if there were other institutions. Finney said there are dozens of universities that have teaching professors. He avoided the label because it indicates a second-class status. He said the proposal is about trying to create a class of collegiate faculty that have a transformational approach to education. He said the institution is excited about the transformation of introductory classes, similar to the developments by the Department of Biological Sciences.

Merola said that collegiate faculty positions are not tenure-track positions, but the AAUP would say that if they are doing research, they are de-facto tenure-track faculty and should be eligible for tenure. How does the group address this concern? Finney said that in the policy draft, they discriminate the level of research for collegiate faculty. Merola mentioned that there have been cases at other universities where people have done extensive research not on the tenure-track, and the AAUP has sanctioned those universities. Finney mentioned that there was an earlier discussion about having a process to promote faculty from other ranks. He then said that if someone is obtaining significant grant money, the institution will try to keep them. But he thinks most people in collegiate faculty appointments will not work towards tenure. Merola indicated that he thinks these positions may be attractive for many people.

Davis asked if there is a way that someone who has good teaching evaluations but poor research metrics to move into a collegiate faculty position. Finney said he would like to ensure that the language is broad enough to allow changes in faculty categories. However, Finney was not in support of specific language to indicate that this is a likely outcome for a failed tenure case. Ultimately, this will be a resource decision for departments and colleges.

Abbas said it appears that there are no major roadblocks. There are some concerns, some justified and some not. He asked if a statement could be added to alleviate these concerns. Finney said he is happy to write a statement. He wondered if language about the need for departments and colleges to develop hiring plans needs to be clearer. Most agreed with this point.

Merola expressed one more concern regarding the salary of collegiate faculty members. Finney said collegiate faculty salaries will be on par with tenure-track faculty, not more or less. The differentiation will come with performance over time.

Davis asked what university was it that the AAUP sanctioned. Merola could not remember. Finney said there are some universities that use unqualified labels for research faculty positions. Virginia Tech does not.

Abbas mentioned that something to keep in mind is that department heads are in charge of the process. Some said that creates fear for some about eroding tenure. He suggested adding a percentage on collegiate faculty to alleviate this concern. Finney expressed reservations about this. Abbas indicated he is flexible to the percentage. The point is to alleviate a concern that tenure will be eroded. Spotila asked if this needed to be in the documents because it was a major concern at the faculty senate. Finney asked if it would be in the resolution or faculty handbook. Zajac asked if we could include language that says, the majority of faculty positions will be tenured and tenure-track. Finney supported this approach. He said he also wants to add a statement about academic freedom in the classroom. Zajac expressed concern about limiting academic freedom to the classroom. Finney said he could broaden it. Spotila also asked to have language in the resolution about grounds for the renewal and termination of contract. This could go into the handbook.

Finney agreed to make the changes to the document and post it on scholar.

2. PT guidelines discussion

Young made the recommended changes to the document from the last meeting. He deemphasized journal impact factor and included article level metrics/description. Zajac made a motion to accept this. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Finney noted the *Physical Review* example on the document only lists JIF as a metric. This is what the committee would like to get away from. Some members of the committee also pointed out that the JIF number is low and may mislead others in the department. Merola also noted *Physical Review* has multiple journals, and may not exist anymore. Finney withdrew his suggestion until the committee finds a suitable replacement. The proposal will be taken to University Promotion and Tenure Committee.

3. Any other business

In regards to the collegiate faculty resolution, Spotila asked if this represented first reading. Abbas indicated this does constitute first reading at CFA and that the resolution would be sent to faculty senate and come back for a second reading.

There was a question if the proposal would be able to make it through University Council by the end of the academic year. Finney said there are three more University Council meetings. Finney and Abbas indicated that we can have second reading at the next meeting and try to get the proposal to University Council for April 4th.

Merola asked question about using altmetrics. Young indicated that he recently made a presentation about it. He will send it out to the committee.

Adjournment

There were no additional items discussed, the meeting was adjourned

Recorder, Ryan Rideau