

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – 2010-2011

The Faculty Affairs Committee met 6 times during 2010-2011. The Committee handled 7 issues over the course of the year. One issue was held over from the previous year; 5 issues were assigned to the committee by the Policy Committee; an additional issue was raised by a committee member.

Mentoring Survey: For over a year, the Faculty Affairs Committee has been attempting to assess the effectiveness of mentoring junior faculty at the University. During 2009-2010, the committee worked on developing a survey to learn faculty opinions as to the effectiveness of such mentoring. During 2010-2011, the committee worked with the Provost's office and the Center for Urban Studies to finalize and administer the mentoring survey. Data have been collected but have yet to be analyzed.

Student Ethics Issue: The committee devoted considerable time this year to the analysis of an issue which arose in the Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences. A student had published her Master's thesis, which was based on a laboratory team effort, without crediting other members of the research team. Other team members, including the student's adviser, were concerned that this compromised their ability to complete and publish their work. Members of Faculty Affairs Committee attended a meeting called by the research Committee to discuss the issue. The University attorney's office has offered the opinion that each student has the right to publish his/her thesis, without limitation. Members of the faculty of the department involved were invited to discuss the issue with the FAC; both groups continue to have concerns on this issue. In response to the problem, the Graduate Council and former Graduate Dean, Mark Wardell, developed a document, "Wayne State University Guidelines for Creating Faculty-Student Compacts." The Faculty Affairs Committee reviewed the document and was concerned that several issues remain unresolved. In particular, the document does not provide for sanctions in the event that students do not observe the recommendations suggested. The comments were submitted to the Policy Committee for transmission to the administration.

Transfer of Computer Science Department to College of Engineering: The Faculty Affairs Committee was one of 4 committees assigned the task of reviewing the Administration's proposal to move the Department of Computer Science (DCS) from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) to the College of Engineering (COE). The committee received very little information on the issue, and spent considerable time attempting to collect data. Reports of votes from the DCS and COE were received, as was a report of a survey of CLAS faculty. The committee held an open meeting to allow faculty and others to comment on the transfer. The committee voted to approve the transfer, but developed a series of issues which were unresolved. The committee recommended that these issues be resolved in the transfer process. The committee also served as the coordinating center for the recommendation to transfer the department, which was presented to the Academic Senate at its April, 2011, meeting. The recommendation was accepted by the Senate and will now go to the administration.

Retention Implementation Task Force Final Report: The Faculty Affairs Committee received a referral from the Policy Committee of the administration's "Retention Implementation Task Force Final Report," developed to deal with the problem of student retention. The committee discussed the report and made comments, which were referred to the Policy Committee.

Concerns Regarding the Departmental Review Committee Process: The Policy Committee assigned the committee to investigate a concern regarding the Provost's departmental review process. One of the review committees expressed a complaint with respect to the structure of the report form, indicating that there were numerous questions which were not applicable to the department in question. The committee discussed the issue with representatives of the Provost's office. It was indicated that many questions were optional, and the form would be altered to ensure that this was clear. The committee believed this satisfied the concern which had been raised.

Concerns Raised about the Loss of Reserve Books from the Library: The committee was asked to deal with a faculty concern over loss of reserve books from the library. This is an increasing problem, largely as a result of budget cuts which limit the number of staff available to monitor the exits. The Policy Committee requested that the committee suggest alternative approaches to remedy the problem. The FAC chair spoke with the Dean of the Library prior to committee discussion. Committee members were unable to formulate remedies, other than returning to the enforcement policies of the past.

Appropriate Tenure Standards for Clinical Faculty: A member of the Faculty Affairs Committee raised the issue of appropriate tenure standards for clinical faculty. She indicated that her college did not have clear standards for faculty who hold clinical positions. After discussion, the committee suggested that the AAUP-AFT would be the best source for this information, and would ensure that any standards developed would conform to the AAUP-AFT contract.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Cay Sengstock, Chair, Faculty Affairs Committee