

FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011-2012

The Academic Senate Faculty Affairs Committee met 7 times in 2011-2012. FAC handled 10 major issues during the course of the Academic Year, as listed below.

1. Faculty Mentoring Process and Survey:

The Committee saw the completion of a Mentoring Survey which had been under discussion by FAC for at least 2 years. The survey was completed through support from the Provost's Office, under the supervision of Kelley Skillin from the Provost's Office and Liz Puscheck, FAC member. FAC discussed the survey results at several meetings, concluding with a presentation by Ryan Duff, a Sociology PhD student who volunteered to assist in data analysis. In general, female faculty members are more likely to receive mentoring, but are generally less satisfied with mentoring than males. Reported mentoring effectiveness scores are not high. Research mentoring, assistance in getting grants, publication, and tenure workshops were what most junior faculty wanted. Mr. Duff indicated he still has the data and is willing to discuss the results with other groups.

2. Student Publication Concern:

An issue which had been carried over from the previous year was the concern over what appears to be a student's unlimited right to publish a thesis/dissertation, without considering the impact on the rights of faculty members or other students. FAC continued to consider the issue during 2011-12. FAC distinguished between two types of research situations. Humanities and most Social Science fields: graduate students often conduct their own independent research, and the ability to publish independently is appropriate. Natural Sciences: student research is usually part of a larger project, often including faculty funding and the contributions of other graduate students. Allowing a student unlimited publishing rights may jeopardize the publishing rights of other project members. Further investigation in reference to the legal issues is necessary, an issue which is beyond the resources of FAC. After discussion at several committee meetings, FAC developed a recommendation to the Graduate Council and University Counsel to develop a varying publication proposal to apply in such situations.

3. Graduate Council Criteria for Graduate Faculty Membership:

FAC discussed the controversial issue of the Graduate Council's new criteria for Graduate Faculty membership, requiring 3 publications, rather than 1, every 4 years, for a faculty member to maintain Graduate Faculty status. Committee members believed this approach failed to recognize the differential publication approaches in different fields, and would jeopardize the PhD programs of some departments. FAC believes the encouragement of departmentally specific standards is preferable, a position which agrees with the alternative recommendation of Policy Committee and the Academic Senate to the Graduate Council.

4. On-Line Education:

The Provost's office requested faculty consultation regarding on-line courses. FAC heard a presentation on this issue from James Mazoue', Director of On-Line Programs. He summarized current programs and compared WSU with other institutions. Focus was on

courses which are completely on line. At present, WSU has about 600 such sections, or about 6% of credit hours; about 20% of students take an on-line class. Committee members expressed concern about the current status of the data; comparability of data to other institutions; what appears to be an unusually low drop rate; questions of the relative effectiveness of online courses; and difficulties of assessing effectiveness. It was clear that the development of more online classes is a high priority. Members believed more accurate comparative data should be obtained, and expressed concern that control of on-line classes be in the hands of the faculty,

5. Reviewing Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Format:

Several Committees, including FAC, were asked to review the SET format and consider whether changes are needed. FAC contributed to the joint report which resulted. FAC's particular concern was the use of online evaluations, which might compromise the security of the data. It was noted that a 2N committee would be established on SETs; FAC members could be involved in that committee. In conjunction with this discussion, FAC also received concerns regarding the format change of SET Scores from PDF to RFT; RFT was believed to be more open to tampering than PDF. Dr. Laura Woodward from the SET office attended an FAC meeting to discuss the issue. She indicated that computer requirements forced the change in format, and demonstrated that PDF is not tamper-proof. The Committee discussed ways in which SET reports could be made secure, such as using Pipeline. She indicated they already are provided on STARS, and would be happy to consider these issues with the SET Committee when it is in operation.

6. Review of Committee Report: "Enhancing Student Academic Success":

FAC was one of several committees asked to review the report from the Student Success Committee, which searched for mechanisms to improve bachelor's level graduation rates and enhance undergraduate student success. FAC thought many of the suggestions were appropriate, and made numerous suggestions, including: early connection between a student and the desired major; early testing to identify a student's greatest potential; continuing the University's traditional commitment to disadvantaged students in the Detroit area; review of general education requirements in reference to student abilities and the needs of specific academic programs; and the tendency of some fields to expand the number of credit hours required for baccalaureate programs. Concern was expressed regarding financial assistance for bridge courses and other additional courses students may need; how faculty would be assigned to teach bridge courses; and the importance of ongoing assessments and formative evaluations throughout the remedial programs.

7. Concern Regarding Delays in HIC Approvals:

The FAC received a complaint concerning exceptionally long delays in approval of research requests for both faculty and student projects from the Human Investigation Committee (HIC). These concerns were received by other committees as well. FAC invited Dr. Philip Cunningham from the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) to discuss the issue at an FAC meeting. He indicated the HIC process is difficult and time-consuming. It has been complicated in recent years due to the University's receipt of a warning letter from the government, related to concerns over WSU's management of human investigation rules. Responding to these issues was critical and

took much staff time. He indicated the OVPR is in the process of computerizing the process, which should make it easier for both applicants and staff. However, it will take nearly a year for this process, and he urged patience. He invited anyone with problems to contact him for assistance.

8. Graduate Faculty Conflict of Interest Issue Disclosure Form:

The Committee was made aware of the fact that the Graduate Council was implementing a new conflict of interest disclosure form for faculty members serving on graduate student committees. This form requires such faculty participants to reveal professional, business or personal relationships which might indicate a possible conflict of interest in the topic of the study. A copy of the form was provided to the Committee.

9. Tenure and Promotion Concern for Interdisciplinary Faculty:

The problem of providing appropriate criteria for evaluation of interdisciplinary faculty members for promotion and tenure was raised by a member. This is an important issue in light of the fact that evaluations are generally based on disciplinary standards. In discussion, members indicated that the T&P committees do not generally depend on a preconceived definition of a particular discipline, but rather on the statements of the department chair and Promotion and Tenure Committee, as well as on the statement of the individual applicant. It is critical that such statements make clear the kinds of criteria which are appropriate in the type of work the individual candidate does. Suggestions were made which candidates can use in improving their chance of success.

10. Distribution of Teaching Assistants (TAs) to Departments:

The Committee had been asked to examine the relative numbers of TAs assigned to different departments, with the possibility of determining whether the assignments were fairly distributed. The Committee encountered difficulty in obtaining data required for this evaluation. Possibly next year's committee could pursue the matter further.

Other Issues: Uniform Policy Regarding Grade Changes and Uniform Student Codes of Conduct Across Colleges and Departments:

Concerns have been raised that different colleges and departments may have variations in their respective codes of student conduct and grade changes. FAC was informed that these issues might be referred for discussion. No such request was received.

Respectfully submitted,

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