

**Faculty Affairs Committee Report
Wayne State University
2013-2014 Academic Year**

The Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) met October 9, 2013 to discuss the committee's 2013-2014 agenda. Based on the suggestion of the Academic Senate Policy Committee, FAC decided to address the topics covered in items 1-5, below, in the order presented. In the winter term, FAC added item 6 "ideas for aiding student retention and improve graduation rates" as requested by the Policy Committee on April 16, 2014. Items 7 and 8 arose in the context of other discussions.

1. FOIA requests for faculty emails:

General Counsel Lou Lessem met with the FAC on November 26, 2013 and summarized key points of Michigan's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). All states and the federal government have FOIA statutes, though there are differences among them. The purpose of the Michigan FOIA is to provide full and complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees. Items concerning official functions are part of the public record accessible under FOIA.

Lessem noted that most FOIA requests are minor and are handled by media relations, but any significant request comes to the legal office. There have been only three significant FOIA requests for faculty emails or faculty research in recent times. In 2005, a FOIA request was made for emails of a faculty member involved in a wetlands project. That request was denied. Recently, a Mackinaw Center FOIA application requested emails of labor studies faculty at Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne based on use of a series of words. University counsel's office asked the individual faculty to sort out their private emails and provide only relevant emails relating to their official work. Michigan and Michigan State responded similarly. The most recent FOIA request was submitted by Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine for records relating to research on dogs. Information was misused, resulting in a member of the group being jailed and therefore a subsequent request for records was denied under the privacy exemption that applies if publishing information could lead to individual harm. In the litigation, the judge ruled that the research itself was a public record but that the group could not seek information on the researchers.

2. Peer Evaluation of Teaching and Online Education.

On January 21, John VanderWeg led a FAC discussion of the current status of guidelines for peer evaluations of teaching (PET). PET is a mandatory process required under the contract, but it is intended to be faculty-driven--faculty input into the timing, coverage and manner of conducting evaluations should be determinative. It is intended to be helpful to the person being evaluated and thus may well be part of the process for identifying a mentor for the person being evaluated. It is not a part of the P&T process and is not to be used by the salary committees for merit pay determinations.

FAC members questioned the timing for the introduction of the process and the relation to the way many departments currently review pre-tenure faculty's teaching. Apparently, one school has already distributed their own guidelines for peer evaluation. In one department, for example, FAC understands that pre-tenured faculty members are likely to be evaluated in the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th year, and this department views the PET as a useful tool for pre-tenured faculty. In another department, FAC was told that peer evaluations are also part of the process for faculty going up for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. Members of the committee urged the administration to develop clear policy guidelines that would apply to all of the schools, to avoid potential problems and misuse of the process.

The committee briefly discussed online education and the need for quality control measures. On March 18 the FAC was informed that the 2N committee for Online Education was in place. AAUP has named Bob Arking and Rita Casey as members of the committee. The administration has selected Joe Hummer and Gwen Gorzelsky to members of the committee. Vander Weg will convene the committee and Matt Ouellett will provide staff support.

3. Tenure factors

On December 11, 2013 the FAC discussed tenure factors. The FAC was informed that most departments have written factors statements but some do not have them and others may well be outdated. It was noted that the collective bargaining statement calls for college and/or department factors, but does not require both.

Associate Provost VanderWeg indicated that the deans and associate deans will be asked to review (and revise if necessary) the tenure factors if a department's guidelines are more than 5 years old.

Some FAC members suggested that the tenure factors should be prominently published on departmental and school/college websites in a way that ensures that all faculty are informed of the departmental norms.

4. Faculty mentoring:

The FAC discussed faculty mentoring at its December 11, 2013 and February 25, 2014 meetings.

A survey was conducted 2 years ago, designed by the Center for Urban Studies. The survey generally sought information from faculty about mentoring. It asked participants if they were being mentored "right now", if they liked the mentoring they received/were receiving, if they would like to see more mentoring and what type of mentoring they would like to see. The survey was sent to the full faculty listserv of several thousand, including GTAs and part-time faculty as well as full-time faculty. It received only 518 responses. Many respondents failed to respond to the question asking for their status, so a key difficulty in using the survey data was the inability to differentiate among the different groups responding.

Nonetheless, the survey did reveal a general desire for more mentoring, especially among people of color. Only 34% of women reported being mentored, and only 23% of men.

Although a mentoring program must be reported by departments as part of the P&T process, there is currently little follow-up through the Provost's Office. FAC suggested that the Provost's Office should seek more detailed feedback on the mentoring process through the deans and find some way to follow up with those up for tenure on whether mentoring is working. John VanderWeg will discuss this with Provost Winters. It would also be important to consider how to provide mentoring for associate professors who have not moved on to promotion or have lagged in their publication of research.

The FAC concluded that it would also be useful to conduct a new survey to evaluate the faculty mentoring process. The FAC chair asked the President of the Senate to provide a copy of the original mentoring survey to the FAC for review and possible revision as a first step in implementing a new survey.

In its final discussion on February 25, 2014, the FAC decided to conduct a short survey of selected department chairs and use the feedback from the chairs in revising the main survey instrument. The following three questions were identified to be included in the Chairs survey:

- i. What does your department do in terms of mentorship?
- ii. What does your department do in terms of mentoring junior faculty?
- iii. The Faculty Affairs Committee is considering conducting a mentoring survey to update information gained in an initial survey conducted several years ago. Please list a few issues/questions you would like the survey to cover.

5. **Retirement presentation/forum:**

The FAC concluded that it would be helpful to organize a forum on retirement for the Fall 2014 semester, to include representatives of Total Compensation and Wellness (TCW), Fidelity, TIAA-CREF and recent retired faculty who could share their experiences. The forum is in the planning stage and will be organized with the help of John VanderWeg's office. It was decided that some of the FAC members will contact recent retirees to the forum to share their experience with the current faculty.

The chair of the FAC wrote to Brett Green of TCW twice (on April 1, 2014 and April 14, 2014), but has not yet received any response. Faculty retirees initially contacted have declined, but further contacts will be pursued.

6. **The Faculty's Role in Aiding Student Retention and Improving Graduation Rates (ASIGR)**

The FAC reviewed a document drafted by Monica Brockmeyer outlining ways that faculty can aid in student retention and improve graduation rates. The FAC is obviously interested in AISGR; however, members of the committee expressed concern that the document reads more like instructions on "how to run a class" than the kinds of innovative activities one might expect such a document to provide to entice faculty to become more actively engaged in retention activities. The FAC considers that the document should explain how particular activities aid in

student retention and increased graduation rates. Any guideline for ASIGR should be broad in nature and should include the sources on which the guidelines were based.

7. Annual Merit Evaluations

The FAC discussion on this topic mainly centered around the use of teaching evaluations (SET) for annual merit raises. The committee noted that the current process seems problematic, particularly for untenured faculty. In particular, there seems to be inconsistency in terms of using class sizes, response rates, old versus new rules, etc., across departments or colleges. Data that are statistically meaningless are nonetheless given weight. Additionally, the perception is that there is inconsistent reporting and use of SET scores (some committees look at only one year, whereas others, perhaps more wisely, consider a range of years) and other indicators of teaching across departments and/or colleges.

FAC concluded that (a) salary committees should be encouraged to consider a broader period than one year for teaching performance/evaluations, and (b) there should be a consistent evaluation period used for teaching, research and service.

8. FAC Composition

Members of the FAC concluded that it is problematic when the committee starts with essentially all new members each year. FAC recommends that committee members be selected with staggered three-year terms, so that the committee would have significant overlap from one year to another.