

Faculty Executive Committee Meeting Friday, October 19, 2007

Present: Susan Bender, Dan Curley (Chair), Mark Huibregtse, Mehmet Odekon, Viviana Rangil, Paty Rubio, Mason Stokes.

Guest: Susan Walzer.

1. Approval of minutes from October 5, 2007.

The minutes were approved with one typo corrected.

2. Discussion of the IPPC Report.

Retiree healthcare was the only item in the report that was discussed, but that discussion was extensive. Mason began by asking for clarification of Pat Oles' statement that the institution should "do its job... and not acquiesce in a perceived mandate." Mark explained that since the Board had not directed that a particular solution be implemented, but only that the problem be addressed, Pat meant to urge IPPC to work in good faith to deliver what we believe to be a good recommendation to the Board. Mehmet suggested that we look at what has happened to faculty salaries since 2000 in real terms, taking into account everything (inflation, healthcare cost sharing, etc.). Sue Bender observed that the administration has been moving away from the original "two-bookend" proposal with no benefit for new hires (after some date); she recalled that Mike West had predicted a split vote in IPPC (which normally seeks consensus). Mehmet proposed that FEC request IPPC to make an out-report on this issue at the November Faculty Meeting, with relevant information distributed beforehand. Subsequent discussion supported this recommendation; we agreed to ask IPPC to describe the problem, lay out some alternatives, and invite questions and comments. The ensuing discussion can inform the faculty representatives on IPPC of their constituents' opinions on the issue. Mark agreed to deliver this request to the IPPC.

3. Discussion of Handbook Part Six, Articles I-VII

The draft of Article VII, which describes the procedures to be followed when resolving a harassment complaint, was the focus of an extensive discussion. Several concerns were raised, among them the following:

- The procedures endow the ADEWD with enormous power and discretion.
- The participation of the Faculty Advisory Panel in the investigation of a case is quite limited, and may not conform to AAUP recommendations.
- Appeals may only be granted on the basis of procedural error, new evidence, or severity of sanction, not on substantive grounds such as misinterpretation of evidence. (The same issue arose regarding appeals of tenure denials, at which time the faculty rejected the limitation of grounds for appeal to procedural errors.)

- The Lary Opitz question: Why aren't these policies and procedures in Part One of the Handbook?
- The statement (in Article VIII) regarding false accusations may be too weak, since false accusations are akin to harassment itself.
- The stipulation of confidentiality ("Any request for information will be provided only on a need-to-know basis. [p. 612]") might be used to deny access to, e.g., CAFR.

Suffice it to say that the committee was, in the words of Dan Curley (in a subsequent e-mail to CAPT and CAFR proposing a joint meeting on Part Six), "very skeptical about the latest draft — the phrase 'dead on arrival' was uttered..."

4. Meeting with Susan Walzer on Service (1:00-1:30)

Susan W. explained that she had been interviewing randomly-selected faculty members (41 so far) over the past two summers regarding various aspects of career satisfaction. Having not yet completed analysis of the data, she was prepared to discuss preliminary impressions rather than conclusions. She organized these into the following categories:

- New faculty issues/perceptions
 - New faculty members serve, but often in new ways such as engaged pedagogy, service learning, etc.
 - Reward structures have not caught up to this reality — there is concern about what "counts."
 - Since the untenured may need to move to a new position, there is concern that the work they do be "transferable" — and committee service is seen as the least transferable form of service.
 - One needs to be "quiet" to get tenure. National research suggests that some faculty feel the need to self-censor until the full professor rank is earned.
- Tenured faculty issues/perceptions
 - Committee service is a waste of time (recommendations are not implemented, etc.).
 - Administrative roles can be assumed too soon, and lead to burnout.
 - Some nurse secret wounds over promotion denials.
 - Promotions can be delayed by administrative service.
- Across-the-board issues/perceptions
 - Committee service is not why faculty members became professors.
 - Some feel that the faculty should "back off" on some matters, and remain engaged only in issues central to the faculty (such as personnel and curriculum).
 - Faculty members are often asked by administrators to work on "half-baked" projects.
 - Some are put off by insider-outsider dynamics in the faculty. (In particular, some untenured faculty may bond only with their peers and perceive the untenured as a subculture.)

- Service can be a political minefield best avoided.

Paty: How can FEC address the “new service” problem? Susan W. said that the FEC initiative can help. We should learn what “service” is becoming and broaden the definition. We need to lessen the “tenure-anxiety” culture. “We cannot run Skidmore on martyrdom.”

Susan W. suggested that FEC’s anticipated “data gathering” project may be less valuable than talking about service in new ways. She asked: “Can we make this a pleasant workplace, somehow? Then people will want to do the work.” It was observed that a lighter teaching load will help a lot.

We should seek a philosophical shift, and ask: “How can we operationalize excellence?” We need to make sure that we are “counting” the right things, e.g., old prejudices against applied work or joint authorship should be rethought. A generational shift is underway that we need to accommodate.

Susan B. observed that recent CAPTs have in fact been willing to consider a wide range of types of service.

Someone (Susan W.?) noted that if you beg a person to serve, the quality of service declines. It was also noted that better support of chairs can lead to better support of junior faculty.

FEC agreed to revisit the issue of service at the College, as well as to consider the larger issue of faculty governance.

Mark Huibregtse