

Minutes of the University Faculty Affairs Committee (UFAC)

October 4, 2017

3:30-5:10 PM, Mercer 131

Present: Cate Brewer, Betsy Lewis, Miriam Liss (chair), Marie McAllister (secretary), Xiaofeng Zhao

Absent: Courtney Clayton

Minutes: The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

I. OLD BUSINESS

1) Unpaid leaves of absence

Last year an unidentified faculty member approached the UFC chair expressing interest in having a "more flexible" policy on unpaid leaves of absence. No further details have been provided, so after studying the current policy, the committee agreed to remove this item from the agenda.

2) Student recording of classes

The committee felt strongly that the University needs a policy on unauthorized recording of classes. We began work on this topic.

Update: Due to an unfortunate failure in communication, the UFAC learned only after its meeting that a draft policy exists and was revised by John Morello following review by the University's lawyer; that Academic Affairs declined to approve a policy on 10/12/16; that UFC agreed to pass the issue to UFAC on 3/1/17; and that the SGA reported to the UFC on 4/5/17 that the Honor Council was willing to hear cases of faculty being recorded without their permission. We are unsure when the most recent draft policy was written, but we thank John Morello for sharing it with us, and will discuss that draft at our next meeting.

3) Adjunct welfare

The committee ranked items on the list from April, 2017, of ways in which UMW might be able to improve adjunct faculty welfare. Marie, Miriam, Xiaofeng, and Cate agreed to act as a subcommittee to write handbook changes and resolutions to send to the UFC, and to begin investigation of several other points. We do not anticipate completing every item this term, and we may return in future to other suggestions on the list.

The resolutions concern salary, fair consideration for full-time positions, and inclusive treatment. The handbook language concerns timely notification of cancelled classes, materials and privileges necessary to do the job (e.g., library privileges, email access), and the retention of certain privileges between teaching assignments. The long-term matters to investigate are the use and compensation of adjunct faculty in creating new (and especially new online) courses, the possibility of converting selected RTA positions to tenure track, and the extent to which adjuncts participate in departmental governance.

4) Faculty committee membership rules

While researching governance, the committee observed some potential issues. It is unclear if committees can have adjunct or administrative faculty members and if so, which committees would be allowed to have them. Marie volunteered to communicate the potential issue to the UFOC.

5) Support for teaching development, particularly for untenured faculty

Discussion of how the UFAC might work with the Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation was tabled.

6) Handbook language on evaluating teaching

Responding to an April request from the Provost that UFAC look into teaching evaluation, the committee discussed whether CAS and COB should consider adopting the detailed language on evaluating teaching adopted by the COE in Appendix K. Among the points made: CAS and COB *Handbook* language already notes that student evaluations are not sufficient on their own; more detailed language might aid junior colleagues; there is much good language in the COE guidelines; the COE's indicators are not measurable; colleges have the right to their own systems; it is not clear what problem we are being asked to address or whether the COE language actually addresses it. The committee decided that no action was needed at this time.

In the process of reviewing this language, the committee had also noted differences in language between the CAS and COB *Handbook* sections on evaluating teaching for merit pay and on evaluating teaching for tenure and promotion. Our study indicated that the content is consistent despite the slightly different wording.

7) Handbook language on mentoring

Noting the great variation in mentoring of junior faculty between departments and colleges, the committee has agreed to discuss whether a common statement on mentoring, possibly modeled on the one adopted by COE, would be valuable. The item was tabled.

II. NEW BUSINESS

1) Disability accommodation and absences

Miriam raised an issue about what kinds of accommodation instructors are expected to provide for classes missed due to disability. It was agreed that this issue falls outside our committee's charge. Marie and Miriam volunteered to bring the issue to Academic Affairs.,

2) Term of the UFC president

The UFC asked UFAC and UFOC to consider the pros and cons of changing the UFC President's term. It was decided that this issue falls outside our committee's charge. Miriam will notify Marcel Rotter and pass on the materials already gathered.

3) Faculty control of scheduling decisions with curricular impact

3a. A faculty member asked the UFOC to examine an administrative decision to offer fewer sections of a course than requested by a department. The committee agreed that while curriculum

is the purview of the faculty, and while faculty workload distribution is among this committee's charges, funding and thus some decisions about staffing fall under the purview of administration. Miriam will ask the faculty member to articulate how the issue relates to either curriculum or faculty workload distribution. (For instance, would the change result in some faculty members having excessive course preps or impact departmental curriculum?)

3b. A faculty member reports that the CAS Interim Dean directed a department not to schedule three-hour courses for full-time faculty. Committee members noted that some courses, especially upper-level seminars, work best pedagogically in the three-hour format. It was thus felt that such a directive might infringe on faculty control of curriculum.

The committee separately noted the impact of scheduling, more generally, on scholarly productivity, work-life balance, and faculty workload. Thus while funding falls under the administration's purview, some aspects of scheduling clearly relate to faculty welfare and some to curriculum. The committee agreed to investigate the two reports further.

4) Athletic absences

Marie raised a concern about increased absences for athletics. It was agreed that this issue falls outside our committee's charge. Marie and Miriam volunteered to bring the issue to Academic Affairs, along with the concern about disability absences.

5) Companion animals and faculty

Marie raised a concern about companion (comfort) animals in offices and classrooms. Tim O'Donnell announced in August that the outgoing director of Disability Resources believed UMW needs a formal policy. Marie noted that most policies she has read allow companion animals only in dorm rooms, not in academic or public spaces. Betsy reported two cases of faculty members being told that their animal-induced allergies/asthma could not be accommodated since they had not registered this as a disability with HR.

Marie will ask Tim O'Donnell whether some committee is already developing a policy on companion animals and how it is handling the apparent requirement that faculty (and presumably students) with potentially serious allergies register their disability. *[Update: the committee subsequently learned that Jessica Machado (ODR) and Sabrina Johnson (HR) have begun work on a policy.]*

III. One-time change in meeting time

The next meeting of the UFAC will take place on November 8 at 4:00 instead of 3:30 to permit Betsy to cover for a colleague on temporary leave.