

Report from the University Faculty Affairs Committee
University of Mary Washington
October 7, 2013

Present:

Eric Gable (Professor, CAS)
Melina Patterson (Associate, CAS)
Jo Tyler (Professor, COE)
Hilary E. Stebbins, (Assistant, CAS)

Members of the committee discussed the summer pay issues. Jo reviewed what was discussed at the forum held by Provost Levin, and it was decided that the next task for the committee would be to decide what or responsibilities were, given our charge, to commenting on any outcomes that result from the Strategic Resources Allocation Initiative.

Draft of memo to UFC president:

UFAC Notes on Summer School Policy. Over the past year and a half the University Faculty Council has discussed with faculty members and amongst themselves, the Summer School Policy initiated by Provost Ian Newbould. The consensus among the faculty is that one plank of this policy is especially troubling—that a faculty member must sign a contract and begin teaching a course without knowing what compensation he or she will receive for the course. The rationale is that a course might have the requisite number of students initially to be profitable, but that students might drop in the first week, making the course unprofitable, and that the instructor's salary should be adjusted accordingly. The cost of such a policy is large in terms of loss of goodwill among the faculty. It violates a fundamental idea of contract. The benefit seems from the data available to the faculty, to be low in terms of money saved or made. We recommend that the University Faculty Council strongly oppose this policy and counsel Provost Jonathan Levin to revise the policy so as to have final contracts with compensation guarantees in place before the semester begins. This will allow individual faculty members to opt out while also allowing students time to find a new course.

UFAC also wishes it to be noted that Summer School Policy is not merely driven by financial concerns but also pedagogical concerns. As those are the province of the faculty, the faculty should be engaged as active participants in any future plans about how to adjust the way we teach summer school courses at the University. We also recommend that when the faculty is so engaged, that existing committees are used rather than ad hoc committees. In recent years several shifts in policy have been initiated and endorsed via ad hoc committees rather than through the existing system of governance and this has led to at least two problems: one, inefficiencies and redundancies; two, declines in faculty morale.