

**To: UFAC**

**From: Mary Beth Mathews and Caitie Finlayson (on behalf also of Leslie Martin, Kelli Slunt, Surupa Gupta, Mara Scanlon, April Wynn, and Laura Wilson)**

**Re: Request to audit and formalize processes for Special Assignments**

### **Background**

Over the last number of years, UMW has filled a number of roles on campus with part-time positions offered to UMW faculty. Some of these have fallen under the title "Faculty Fellow" (like those at Academic Services, CCPD, the Teaching Center, DTLT, etc.). Others have been defined as "special assignments": Directors of the Honors Program, Women's and Gender Studies Program, QEP (two faculty members), Speaking Center and SI Program, GIS program, Center for Teaching, Center for Community Engagement, First-Year Experience, and Safe Zone Program; Faculty Athletics Representative; Procedural Advisor to the Honor system; Assistant Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. There are others for which the exact category of the position is unknown--to name just a few, Director/Leader of the Strategic Plan, Director of UMW Galleries, Directors of the Summer Enrichment Program, or Director of the Leidecker Center for Asian Studies.

For the faculty in these positions, the benefits are an opportunity to earn more; to learn about or develop important units in the University; and, for those who desire it, to build administrative skills that may open to other positions or career advancement. The benefits to the University also seem clear: faculty leaders committed to the University who bring expertise and institutional memory and who hold positions that might otherwise require outside hiring, representing significant savings in salary and benefits.

Despite their broad applications, Special Assignments (SAs) have remained confusing or opaque, including to those who hold them, and their procedures have shifted over a number of years. As it seems likely that UMW will continue or increase the role of SAs, we see a need for more comprehensive understanding of the positions and for Handbook revision to address their unusual complications.

### **Requested Information and Clarifications**

While the parameters for Faculty Fellows seem rather well established (8 hours/week, \$8000), those for Special Assignments and similar positions seem much less so, with some differences in, for example, the following crucial areas: salary; teaching load release; summer expectations; and explicitness or even existence of contracts and job descriptions. Furthermore, there is no established procedure for how these positions are reported and evaluated, including for promotion and tenure. We therefore request that the following be addressed:

1. **Transparency, Consistency, and Equity:** Because SAs are used by various administrative units and report to different cabinet and sub-cabinet members, a full picture of their parameters is not easily available. We ask that UFAC conduct an audit of

SAs across UMW, 2012-present, establishing and making available a full list of all SAs and, for each, the following:

- a. Reporting structure
  - b. Formalization or process of hiring/selection and contracts
  - c. Salary
  - d. Teaching release for each position that is funded by the University (*note*: some SAs, finding the administrative work to be extremely time consuming, have been told they may have one or more releases only if their own SA unit funds that release, which in some cases would decimate the unit and in none is desirable)
  - e. Expectations for time commitments, including summer
  - f. Schedule and structure of evaluation procedures (see below also)
2. **Assessment and Individual Impact:** For some time it has been clear that our faculty evaluation procedures are not designed to account for SAs. We ask for UFAC, and, as necessary, UFOC, P & T, or other UFC committees, to consider and address the following at the Handbook level:
- a. How does an SA fall into the traditional evaluation categories of teaching--professional development--service? Where and how shall it be reported on the FAAR?

Some who work in an SA count it as service, but faculty who hold the positions are still required to serve on college and university committees. Furthermore, they have been found by the CAS Dean to be ineligible for the pass-around course releases, which are designed to allow more time for service, creating a problematic illogic and, in practice, a penalty for assuming an SA. On the other hand, some of the work required for SAs entails research, writing, and dissemination of ideas similar to more traditional "professional development," but it has not been assessed in that capacity in annual evaluation procedures.
  - b. How will the promotion and tenure processes weigh SAs?
    - i. How will they accommodate the fact that taking on a special assignment will almost certainly slow production of disciplinary research or creative output?
    - ii. How can we reframe the intellectual work of the SA, if appropriate, as another kind of professional "productivity"?
    - iii. How should evaluations given by SA supervisors be included in the P/T portfolio or considered by the committee?
3. **Impact on Academic Departments:** The UFAC/UFC may direct these issues to the AAC or Deans, but the following should be formally established:
- a. How will departments be compensated for teaching release time (see 1.d)?
  - b. As the administration is now tracking the percentage of faculty per department who are professionally productive within their discipline in each academic year, in what way will a faculty member's delayed disciplinary research because they have taken on an SA be accounted for? What are the repercussions for that

lower “productivity” for the academic unit? Alternately, how can we reframe the work of the SA as important professional production?