

## UFAC Meeting Minutes October 4, 2021

**Meeting Participants:** Randy Reif (at-large, Chair), Eric Bonds (CAS, Secretary), Caitie Finlayson (at-large), Lance Gentry (COB), Jennifer Barry (at-large), and Kyle Schultz (COE)

**Guest:** Provost Tim O'Donnell

### **Equity Study**

The committee held a conversation to bring Provost O'Donnell up to speed regarding the proposed equity study. This study was initially fast-tracked by former Provost Mikhalevsky last spring, but the study as it was then envisioned would not have answered questions and concerns raised by faculty, and would not have been done by a firm that specializes in this type of research.

The provost confirmed that the study is now on hold until he has clear recommendations from the UFAC and UFC about what this study should include.

He also agreed that, while using a research firm that isn't on an existing contract might delay the project, it could potentially produce a more useful study. If the UFAC could identify a firm, this could be helpful. Tim also said that a subcommittee—including representatives from both the UFAC and the UFC—could help save time so that everyone doesn't have to be involved in vetting proposals and selecting a firm.

The provost told the committee that he will talk to HR about procurement for the study and the pathway to evaluate proposals.

Members noted that the UFAC is on track to present the UFC options and recommendations for the study, and then will seek the UFC's input.

The provost stressed that it was important that issues about equity also include staff. He suggested that the committee should reach out to Kristin as chair of the UFC, and then she can make the chair of the USC aware of the need for the study, creating the possibility for coordination.

The goal for a timeline would be to get the procurement process running with a request for bids this fall, in which proposals for the study could be evaluated in January.

About \$25,000 is budgeted for this study. Members raised the concern that if budgets are too restrictive, this might mean that the faculty and staff equity studies might need to be split in order to address the particularities of each focus group.

### **Concerns About the Allocation of Space**

The provost shared that the Space Committee is composed of the university vice presidents. His experience is that decisions about the allocation of space at the university are frequently reactive, rather than strategic. Decisions about space allocation require confidentiality because decisions can be controversial. But the provost doesn't disagree that we need a more clear and transparent process. He thinks that the concern the committee raised about the allocation of space are all valid and are worthy of discussion. He thinks it would be worth having a discussion with Jeff McClurken.

### **Morale**

UFAC members also brought up concerns about morale and messaging that keeps asking faculty to do more, along with "doom and gloom" kinds of communication, which includes real budget concerns and demographic concerns. How can faculty be involved in helping the university authentically respond to these crises? Would lower teaching loads be one "upside" for faculty teaching at a now smaller university? It was also noted that faculty have had a lot taken away in terms of sabbaticals and supplemental research funding without a clear timeline of when those items would return.

The provost acknowledged this concern with empathy. Our enrollment hasn't been this small since 1992. He then posed a few questions he is currently weighing in order to address this issue our new reality as an institution. What did the university look like in 1992? Maybe we could take away some of our service obligations or rethink some of the ways we do some service. If we are back to 1992, what does this look like? The provost also spoke to areas he felt more optimistic. He will continue to think through other proactive strategies and invited the committee to come up with suggestions.

### **SHEV**

Members also raised concerns about requirements for faculty in smaller programs or majors to write unnecessary reports defending their existence when SHEV singles them out for having smaller numbers of graduates. What can UMW do to push back against this SHEV requirement, or to at least support faculty in this process?

### **Decisions made by the UFAC**

- The committee agreed to submit our memorandum regarding the allocation of space at the university for consideration to the UFC, so that it might be fully considered at the next meeting.
- The UFAC chair will reach out to Kristin about the equity study, and she can then coordinate with the chair of the University Staff Council. We will send our recommendations regarding the equity study on to the UFC so that they can be considered at an upcoming meeting, with a goal for its inclusion in the November meeting.

- The College of Business submitted proposed changes to Appendix J (regarding tenure and promotion criteria) in the Faculty Handbook. The UFAC did not, however, have a copy of the proposal that clearly identified all the proposed changes. Consequently, the committee did not feel comfortable voting in support, but could potentially do so over email after receiving a document with all the proposed changes highlighted.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm

Next meeting will be on November 8<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.