

University Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 29
3:00 pm via Zoom

Attending: Jenny Barry (at large), Caitlin Finlayson (chair, at large), Lance Gentry (secretary, COB), Miriam Liss (CAS), Kyle Schultz (COE), and Jessica Zeitz (at large).

Guest: Tim O'Donnell (provost) joined at 3:30 PM

Caitlin called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

Old Business

- **Discussion on Workload for Smaller Colleges:** Committee discussed the high service loads put on smaller colleges, especially College of Education. Both the COE and COB are down about seven faculty each compared to just six or seven years ago. Last year we discussed options such as replacing the requirement for all colleges to serve on most university committees with may serve. Today, the committee suggested looking at major changes such as eliminating central committees such as the UCC (if a college committee has approved a curriculum change, it is probably good; and if not, the UFC still needs to approve it). Committee also discussed replacing UFC with a faculty senate. We discussed the benefits of being able to discuss problems collaboratively across departments and how this might improve morale by allowing faculty to feel like they have a greater voice, and a more direct line of communication, regarding institutional issues.

Search Advocate training may help minority faculty by enabling other faculty to represent all perspectives on search committees. All search chairs are currently going through the training. The committee came up with some suggestions for encouraging more people to undergo training, such as letting faculty know that search advocates will only be asked to serve on one search committee a year and providing an incentive (financial or otherwise) for search advocates who serve and/or for attending training. We also discussed that holding trainings at times when we are not teaching (e.g., May) would encourage more people who are busy during the semester to be able to attend and appreciate UMW doing so in May 2022.

- **Update on Student Evaluation Bias Statement:** Caitie said Debra Schleef had agreed to incorporate the bias statement and had already implemented it for Fall 2022.

New Business

- **Student mid-term grading:** Committee asks that the University put the mid-term grading deadline on the academic calendar (online) each semester when it posts the other dates.
- **Equity study update:** Provost O'Donnell informed the committee that the university finished providing the requested data to the research firm approximately a week and half

ago. Gallagher should have some preliminary findings at their next meeting. Tim then invited the UFAC chair (Professor Finlayson) to attend the next research meeting if she desired.

- **Sabbatical update:** There were 12 sabbatical applications. The committee is the process of evaluating them. The university has committed to supporting at least five of these applications for the next academic year and will try to fund more than this.
- **Faculty visa support:** The provost believes that embassies are taking much longer to approve visas compared to pre-Covid. He believes that it will be very challenging, if not impossible, to have visas approved within a three-month period. UMW could ask the BOV to consider approving positions at an earlier meeting (instead of the standard May meeting), but it is unlikely that the BOV would approve it since they wait for legislative approval. Tim said that Martha Link is an available resource for existing foreign faculty. UMW currently pays for premium processing to expediate the visa process for our foreign faculty to the extent feasible. Tim also invited the committee to make suggestions for making the process more known to all faculty. A suggestion to update the UMW website to clearly communicate both processes (initial visa application and renewals) with links to the appropriate sites was made. The provost also encouraged all faculty struggling with visas to reach out to the administration.
- **Faculty morale:** Committee revisited burn out concern for our faculty. Relevant article at <https://hbr.org/2021/03/how-to-measure-burnout-accurately-and-ethically>. Committee members will review the article and/or find additional information to discuss at our next meeting.
- **Next Meeting:** The committee agreed our next meeting would be October 27 at 3:00 PM via Zoom.
- **Recommendations for UFC:**

The committee would like to recommend that the UFC consider eliminating the University Curriculum Committee. Since the UFC has to approve all committee action items, the UCC seems redundant.

The committee would also like the UFC to discuss changes to the faculty governance structure to reduce the service burden on the smaller colleges, improve cross-disciplinary collaboration, and improve faculty morale by allowing faculty to feel like they have more of a voice in decision-making and a clear line of communication. Is the faculty senate model more common across the state of Virginia? How often do UFC members hear from their constituents? How might this communication be improved by shifting to a senate model?

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

These minutes were electronically approved by the committee on October 3, 2022.