

## University Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting Agenda

Thursday, March 9

3:00 p.m.

In attendance: Catie Finlayson (chair), Miriam Liss (acting secretary), Jennifer Barry, Kyle Schultz, Jessica Zeitz

Welcome and call to order 3:00pm

Old Business

1. Morale and Faculty Burnout Survey:

So far we have 114 responses (of 229 faculty). It went to the trash folder of many faculty. An email went out to faculty who did not respond and we got an additional 44 responses today.

We will look at the data at the next meeting in Qualtrics and then decide if we want to pull down data and look at it in SPSS further in order to do more specific analyses or inferential statistics.

UFAC would like to invite Debra Schlee to our next meeting to discuss collection, assessment, and distribution of survey results.

We will close survey a few days after the second reminder which will go out next week.

2. Wrap up from Enrollment Conversations with Tim and Grant

There seems to be a disconnect about faculty workload. Tim said we have a lot of leeway for faculty to come up with solutions about faculty workload, but in practice faculty and chairs have experienced less flexibility.

There are two issues: one is an issue of flexibility and how much creativity faculty actually have in how we re-organize and propose to teach our classes moving forward. For example, would we be allowed to team teach and could we be flexible in deciding how that counts in our workload or adjusting teaching loads to match our new student population? The other issue concerns inequity and the fact that some departments are under resourced compared to other departments. Ultimately, we are hoping that the expressed autonomy relayed by Tim in our last meeting could be consistently applied across departments as we continue to propose new solutions to our current institutional reality and expected lower student enrollment moving forward.

As a committee we continue to be concerned by the issue of inequity about service. Some departments have expectations that everyone serves on a department (or college) and University committee. In other departments, there is less of an expectation for service or there are no clear guidelines. In the COE a lot of the needs stem from the needs of the community and schools they serve.

As we continue to address this concern, some members proposed that we may wish to gather information from departments about expectations for service. Some departments have a formal documents that outline what constitutes different levels of service. If we are doing too much service we are at risk for burnout.

One idea is to figure out what a reasonable expectation for one faculty member in terms of service. If we have more service needs than is possible given these expectations then perhaps we need to streamline service and prioritize what is most important. We also need guidance on what to prioritize in individual cases – should we prioritize department service, college service, etc?

#### New Business

1. From Eric Bonds, Chair of UMW AAUP: Academic Freedom Letter

The UFAC recently received the attached letter from the UMW AAUP chapter. We ask the UFC to carefully read the letter. One concern UFAC members wanted to clarify is the possible false dichotomy that maybe found in the phrases “welcoming environment” and “challenging conversations.” As a committee we agreed that we never want students to feel unsafe or disrespected. We *do* want them to feel challenged intellectually. The clarity is that we need to welcome students for who they are (e.g., not discriminate students on the base of any identity), but we should be able to have conversations about difficult and challenging topics even if and when that makes students uncomfortable. We too believe that the administration should trust faculty to care about our students but also expect that we are here to challenge them.

2. Concern from faculty member: Do our P&T guidelines accurately reflect our service values? (Do only formal committees “count” as service - what about more informal service to UMW or community engaged service?)

This is something we can better address when we have our results from the survey.

3. Next meeting date? April 6, 3pm

Adjourn 3:57pm

To the University Faculty Affairs Committee,

UMW's Chapter of the AAUP writes to draw your attention to its commitment to academic freedom. We understand that today's environment is one of political polarization and, at times, uncivil discourse.

We are concerned, however, by a recent line in a message President Paino sent to the UMW community. In the message Paino asked "When does speech cross the line from making someone merely uncomfortable to making them feel unsafe or unwelcomed?" Threats to safety are not compatible with our mission and must not be tolerated, but "making someone feel unwelcomed" is a different matter entirely.

We are concerned that, coming from the president of the university, this line might make faculty and students believe that the imperative in the Mary Washington classroom is to make everyone feel welcome, even if that means sacrificing academic freedom and avoiding hard questions or difficult topics. Academic freedom means giving faculty the autonomy to make teaching decisions that are appropriate to intellectual exploration and critical thinking in their discipline. That process may make some students uncomfortable and it may make some feel unwelcomed.

UMW's Chapter of the AAUP remains committed to academic freedom as a core principle underlying what we do in higher education.

Sincerely,

UMW's AAUP