

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Tuesday, November 19, 2013
2:30 – 4:30
300 Morrill Hall**

Present: Joseph Konstan (chair), Chris Bourland, Arlene Carney, Randy Croce, Sophia Gladding, Tabitha Grier-Reed, Heath Himstedt, Scott Lanyon, Theodor Litman, Karen Miksch, Peh Ng, Nicholas Poggioli, George Sell

Absent: Kathryn Brown, Teri Caraway, Dann Chapman, Sam Gill, Frank Kulacki

Guests: none

[In these minutes: (1) committee business; (2) spousal hires; (3) changes to the Student-Rating-of-Teaching (SRT) form]

1. Committee Business

Professor Konstan convened the meeting at 2:30 and began by noting that since the minutes of the Committee's discussion of parental leave and faculty caregivers had been distributed, there was considerable feedback, mostly positive, supporting what the Committee is doing. Some raised issues that the Committee did not address, such as semester-long teaching leaves at childbirth and more reliable and available daycare on campus. The statement the Committee adopted will move through the process but it could amend its statement if it wished to do so.

Professor Sell asked if there had been any feedback on the discussion of MOOCs. Professor Konstan said there had been; individuals thanked the Committee for taking them up and asked that the subject not be dropped.

Professor Konstan commented that many of the Committee discussions are intended to make issues visible to the faculty, and items are placed on the agenda explicitly for that purpose.

2. Spousal Hires

Professor Konstan introduced the concept of spousal hires. Various people with experience related to recruiting have raised the issue of the challenges associated with recruiting faculty who come with a partner seeking employment as well, and particularly in the case where both individuals seek tenure-track faculty jobs. A number of people have suggested that spousal hires should be a centrally-funded obligation because it is not treating people equally if the question (with one candidate for a position) is whether a department or college is willing to invest two salaries in order to get one person.

Professor Konstan drew the attention of Committee members to comments from Professor Kulacki, who was unable to attend the meeting but sent a message expressing his views about spousal

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hiring. Professor Kulacki's message indicated he believes spousal hires are a necessity, that the University needs a policy that provides for central funds that is college-neutral, and offers some details about hiring a spouse. He also recommended obtaining data "on the number of spousal hires in the past ten years, how many have been successful (tenure awarded to both) and how many have been unsuccessful either at the hiring stage or after initial appointments." Professor Konstan said it would also be helpful to know how they were paid for across colleges and the payment arrangements.

Professor Lanyon noted that Professor Kulacki thought the percentage of regular faculty involved in spousal hires would be low, but in his department, one-third of the faculty are involved. The number may vary across disciplines, but in his field it is high. Professor Konstan asked about the number of faculty/faculty and faculty/non-faculty hires. Professor Lanyon said that all but one case was faculty/faculty and it varies in terms of which was the "primary" hire and which was "secondary." Only one was a non-tenure-track hire, and the hiring of the pair does not always occur at the same time.

Professor Ng reported that in her division at Morris a number of years ago, they wanted to hire someone with a spouse and suggested two 75%-time appointments. The individuals accepted it and the Morris faculty were very glad they did. It is possible to be creative.

Professor Lanyon said he was aware of one circumstance where a couple was asked if they would entertain such an arrangement before any offer was extended, which he believes to be inappropriate, because the hiring process is to be evaluation of individuals.

Professor Konstan asked Vice Provost Carney for her perspective. Dr. Carney noted that hiring is not in her portfolio—that occurs at the college level—so she is rarely consulted about it. She reported that the University participated a few years ago in a study of dual-career couples conducted by Stanford University researchers; it identified issues but did not offer any solutions. She said she would provide a copy of the report to the Committee.

Dr. Carney said she does talk about spousal hiring at orientation for new department chairs. She suggested the Committee speak with Mary Everly in Human Resources, who helps with relocation. She has an extensive set of services to provide to departments when they are recruiting faculty members. Dr. Carney also suggested use of the Upper Midwest HERC (Higher Education Recruitment Consortium), a national service that is under-used; in the case of the Upper Midwest version, every position at every college and university in the Midwest is listed. This is valuable for students as well as dual-career couples.

Professor Konstan asked if the provost's office aggregates data about spousal recruitment. If not, would they be willing to ask the deans for them? Dr. Carney said it would difficult to follow up on Professor Kulacki's suggestion to obtain ten years of data. From about 2006-2012 the Office of Equity and Diversity handled bridge funds for target-of-opportunity hires and spousal hires; those were non-recurring funds. She said did not know if that office collected longitudinal data but they can be asked. In any case, compilation of the data will not be quick.

Professor Konstan said that in many cases, the question never reached the level of seeking bridge funds, so the data would not reveal how often departments failed to be able to make a spousal hire. Knowing about successes would be helpful but it would not indicate the proportion of total cases. Dr. Carney repeated that it would be difficult to obtain data for ten years; the provost's office is now asking

the colleges for information on hires, and have done so for two years, but they have not asked about spousal hires—but could do so now. They ask who was hired, the salary, set-up costs, space, rank, etc. Professor Konstan said the Committee would be helped by having such data.

Professor Konstan asked what the University's aspirational peers do about spousal hiring and recruiting dual-career couples. To recruit the best, the institution would need two sets of recurring funds, Dr. Carney said, so that each department has the funding for a position. Professor Kulacki suggested a central fund, which would need to be unspent recurring funds. There could be 10-20 such hires per year, which would mean finding a considerable amount of money, which would mean increasing the cost pool. Some institutions may set aside central funds; most of the CIC schools use bridging funds. Provost Hanson works with the deans on these cases.

Dr. Carney said there have been creative solutions that required trust. In one instance, departments shared positions (that is, they lent an unfilled line). There are unusual cases where two people apply for two positions and both are hired. More typical is that the "primary" department believes the other department should hire the "secondary" person—and believes the other department is being unreasonable when it declines to do so. Yet, when the shoe is on the other foot, that original department may well refuse to hire someone proposed in conjunction with another department's "primary" hire. The problem is that each unit wants to hire a best fit, and these situations can be tough to resolve. Some colleges pay for the "secondary" appointment in another college for a few years. What would be best would be set of recurring funds that could be used; one problem with bridge funds is that some colleges hire earlier than others, so the bridge funds are used up by the time the later-hiring colleges request them. Dr. Carney said that none of her peers at other institutions believe they have a good solution. About 70% of academic women have an academic partner and about 50% of academic men have one; that is a lot of people and institutions need creative solutions.

Professor Lanyon said that the Committee would also want to know about the number of offers that were rejected. Dr. Carney agreed, and said they are also asking about retention (both successful and not). Professor Lanyon said that while his department was successful in its last round of hiring, when most appointments included a spousal hire, in two cases the offer was rejected because of spousal issues that the department could not adequately address.

Dr. Carney said that with spousal hires, often people do not deal with the aftermath: she has heard it said that someone should not be considered for an award because the person was a spousal hire; she (Dr. Carney) told the department that it does not matter how someone came to the University, they were hired as a faculty member. This view is related to retention: if a spousal hire feels like a second-class citizen the entire time he or she is here, the University can easily lose both individuals.

Professor Lanyon said the phenomenon of spousal hiring has become so common that there is a sense on the part of some applicants that the University is *obligated* to make an offer; one hears this view from graduate students in particular. The faculty must be clear with students that there is no such obligation and that any hire must be based on quality.

Professor Miksch said that the literature on the topic indicates that especially if the "secondary" hire is a woman, she is often seen as not able to go anywhere—will not leave—so is offered part-time or adjunct appointments. The assumption is that the man has the job. She said she hopes that has changed over time. The institution must deal with the perception that someone is the "lesser" hire, which view

violates a number of University policies. This is analogous to the extension of the probationary period: the policy is in place but there are cases where probationary faculty members are told not to use its provisions. She has also heard it said that people should not ask about a spousal hire because that makes them less likely to get the job or less likely to obtain tenure.

Professor Grier-Reed recalled that she had recently chaired a search committee that could not successfully negotiate a position with someone because of spousal issues—but she has no indication that that case was documented anywhere. It likely was not, Dr. Carney said, which is why data provided to the Committee will have to largely be prospective. Professor Konstan commented that even those data will be difficult to obtain because departments want to hire someone they know will accept an offer, which means they may stay away from candidates who may have a spouse who also needs a job. Some people never receive an offer because the department does not believe they will accept. Committees make judgments about candidates—and that may vary by field.

There is both a time cycle and a status issue, Professor Konstan said. It is easier to obtain concessions at the time of hire or during a retention offer, but a spouse may not be ready until later—and it would be rare that the spouse would be hired then. The reason no one has found a perfect solution is because if one models spousal hiring economically, there is no perfect solution. There is reduced motivation to evaluate quality in a spousal hire if no local funds are invested. The institution wants each group invested in its hire, so it should not be the case that there is no unit investment—and the University wants the couple to be invested in the decision as well. Professor Konstan suggested that if the Committee is going to take up this issue at further length, it should not seek the perfect solution but should identify best practices.

If the Committee proposes to move ahead with a system policy, Professor Ng said, she would also like to see the University shorten the time between offers to the candidate and the spouse. It can take a long time. Dr. Carney said it is usually the other department that takes the time.

Professor Lanyon said it would be great if there were central funds, but it would be better if there were an advocate for a spouse/partner. Who is responsible when the department learns there is a spouse/partner? The search committee chair? The department chair? The dean? Everyone has his/her own agenda and search committee and department chairs may be inexperienced with such negotiations. An advocate who can work with the partner and units across the University/community would be very helpful.

Professor Miksch commented that departments always seem to act surprised when they learn there is a spouse who also needs an academic job, but the situation arises all the time. People meet in graduate school or while working in their field, so there are naturally couples, and there should be structures flexible enough so that units can move forward and recognizing that there are a large number of people in the situation. Finalists for a position often have an academic spouse.

Dr. Carney said that the Council of Faculty Associate Deans has helped some (and it includes Morris and Rochester). Because the associate deans now know each other, it is easier for them to call a colleague with a spousal hiring problem. That makes a difference when the situation arises.

Professor Lanyon suggested that in order for the University to be more welcoming, it should have a policy that advises job candidates not to reveal their marital/partner status. Applicants are uncertain

what is expected of them about revealing marital/partner status. Conversely, sometimes faculty get mad when applicants say nothing until the end of the process. A University policy would clarify the situation. Dr. Himstedt said he is involved in the hiring process now and is asked if he wishes to bring in a spouse or significant other for a visit to the area; it makes him mad but he also understands the institution is trying to be nice. It would help if departments could say they do not want candidates to tell them. In that case the University would only know at the last minute, Dr. Carney observed—and could not help the person who has a spouse/partner, Dr. Himstedt added.

Professor Konstan said that recruiting varies enormously by discipline. Some start at national meetings with screening interviews, others are highly compressed time-cycles. In many fields, there is a big hiring crunch as the dominoes are set up to topple—as any one person accepts or rejects an offer, a series of other offers are made. In his field, no one accepts a job in February; by April many of the good people are gone. Departments feel a need to move very quickly and will tend to skip over qualified candidates they don't think will be willing to accept an offer—or to accept one quickly.

The more senior the faculty member is, the more there is a problem, Dr. Carney said, because colleagues in the field know whether someone has a partner/spouse.

The Committee did not define a specific next step other than to review the results of the Stanford study and to review data being collected by the Provost's office when enough of it had been collected.

3. Changes to the Student-Rating-of-Teaching (SRT) Form

Professor Konstan asked Committee members to review the revised proposal to change the SRT form. He noted that the questions have been tweaked since the previous Committee discussion; does the Committee wish to say anything about it? It will be taken up by the Faculty Consultative Committee and discussed at the Faculty Senate in December. [The revised proposal read as follows, between the * * *:

Overview of the proposed revision:

- Make the results of six items from the revised SRT available to students
- Retain six core items from the current SRT; add five additional items
- Incorporate, as far as possible, questions similar to those in the current Student Release Survey
- Eliminate the Student Release Survey and release a subset of SRT results (questions 7-11) for all courses and instead identify a subset of SRT results that will be released to students without violating the Minnesota Data Practices Act.

Revised SRT

1. The instructor was well prepared for class.
2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
3. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.
4. The instructor treated me with respect.
5. The instructor set high expectations for learning the content.
6. I would recommend this instructor to other students.

Course related items 7-11 will be released to students

7. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.

8. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.
9. Instructional technology employed in this course was used effectively (1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A).
10. The grading standards for this course were clear.
11. I would recommend this course to other students.

WRITTEN COMMENTS SECTION

- What did the instructor do that most helped your learning?
- What suggestions do you have for improving this course?

* * *

Professor Konstan said he understood that questions 7-11 were crafted to avoid having to rely on an opt-in system; they are phrased about the course, not the instructor, but that may be a convenient fiction. The institution wants to provide more information to students; it cannot be used in personnel decisions.

Professor Ng agreed that those questions are not related to the instructor, but when a course is only taught by one faculty member in a small department, they will be interpreted as being about the instructor, and #11 implies the instructor. This is not a big concern, however, she added.

Ms. Bourland said that their program uses a cohort model so students have to take certain courses. The ratings will be irrelevant. Dr. Carney said that is not the case with large liberal-education courses, however, and it is not possible to have a one-size-fits-all system at the University. This proposal addresses concerns that students have but there will be limits (e.g., no small classes will be reported). Ms. Bourland agreed and recalled that Dr. Langley had said that no one will ever agree on a rubric; no matter what is proposed, one can always take issue with it.

Are there elements of the proposal about which the Committee feels strongly enough that it wishes to recommend a change, Professor Konstan asked?

Professor Grier-Reed said she favored the proposal and endorsed the idea of getting rid of an opt-in system. She said she did not believe she had opted in, not because she did not want students to have the information but because of neglect and not knowing how. This would be a positive change. And one cannot opt out, Professor Ng pointed out.

Mr. Croce said that the revised questions responded to concerns expressed by Committee members, and he believed the Committee should endorse it. He so moved. Professor Konstan said the Committee reviewed the revised questions on the SRT form, appreciated that the Committee's concerns were addressed, and endorses the proposal.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the proposal, whereupon Professor Konstan adjourned the meeting at 3:45.

-- Gary Engstrand

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