

## **SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS (SCFA)**

November 11, 2014

Minutes of the meeting

*These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.*

[In these minutes: Subcommittee on Faculty Development Leaves Update, Post Doctorate Employment Status, Non-Tenure-Track and Other Types of Faculty Positions]

**PRESENT:** Joseph Konstan (chair), Christina Bourland, Joe Price, Phil Buhlmann, Allen Levine, Theodor Litman, Teri Caraway, Sophia Gladding, Tabitha Grier-Reed, Robert Kudrle, Scott Lanyon, Monica Luciana, Peh Ng, Lori Rhudy, Daniel Skaar, Brett Colson, Amira Masri, Leah Reinert

**REGRETS:** Frank Kulacki

**ABSENT:** Kathy Brown, Teresa Kimberley, George Sell

**GUESTS:** Melissa Anderson, associate dean of graduate education, Graduate School; Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Henning Schroeder; Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations & Staff Compensation, Office of Human Resources

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

1. **Call to order:** Professor Konstan convened the meeting, welcomed those present and called for a round of introductions.

2. **SCFA Subcommittee on Faculty Development Leaves update:** Professor Konstan introduced the first agenda item, an update from the chair of the SCFA Subcommittee on Faculty Development Leaves, which has been looking at development leaves, particularly sabbaticals. This topic was motivated by the observation that the University would benefit if its leave programs were structured such that the institution would make a greater investment in faculty renewing themselves. A number of faculty find that the way the leave programs are currently structured makes them difficult to take, e.g., a sabbatical for financial reasons. He noted that the subcommittee is exploring how to remove/reduce the obstacles that prevent faculty from taking development leaves.

Professor Ng, chair, the SCFA Subcommittee on Faculty Development Leaves, noted that the subcommittee was formed in the fall of 2013. Since its inception, the subcommittee has consulted with various administrative offices and has also solicited input from SCFA members on moving this issue forward. She said that she comes before the committee today to gauge SCFA's sentiment on two options:

- Option 1 from the December 3, 2013 SCFA meeting:
  - Offer a non-competitive single semester leave for probationary faculty.
  - Offer a one-semester sabbatical at 100% salary.
  - Offer a two-semester sabbatical at 50% salary or slightly more.
  
- Option 2 from the May 6, 2014 SCFA meeting:
  - Offer a competitive single semester leave for probationary and tenured faculty.
  - Offer a one-semester sabbatical at 80% salary.
  - Offer a two-semester sabbatical at 50% salary or slightly more.

Before taking a straw poll, Professor Konstan briefly summarized the two options. The straw poll was taken and the results were 11 members in favor of option 1, zero members in favor of option 2, and two members with no preference for either option. Along these same lines, Professor Konstan asked members their opinions on whether the subcommittee should focus on securing a single semester sabbatical at 100% salary or whether it should include as part of its focus securing less-frequent, full-year sabbaticals at a higher percentage of pay. Another straw poll was taken, and four members voted to include the less-frequent, full-year sabbatical as part of the subcommittee's focus, four voted against, and four had no preference. In closing, Professor Konstan reported he also asked the subcommittee to explore whether administratively it could be made easier for people who are going to experience a reduced salary to spread the reduction out over a three year period.

**3. Post-doctorate employment status:** Professor Konstan welcomed Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Henning Schroeder who was invited to talk about postdoc employment along with Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations & Staff Compensation, Office of Human Resources, who had not yet arrived. Before beginning the discussion, Professor Konstan called for another round of introductions.

Professor Konstan asked for Dr. Schroeder to talk about postdocs and the support provided to them by the University. Dr. Schroeder began by introducing Melissa Anderson, associate dean of graduate education in the Graduate School, who is heading the initiative on post-doctorate affairs. He acknowledged the changing nature of the postdoc employment status as students move from being a fellow to a postdoc associate or research associate. The goal, said Dr. Schroeder, is to not have postdocs constantly having to deal with administrative issues, e.g., health benefits, salary, taxes, but to be able to focus on their research.

Before starting the discussion, Dr. Schroeder shared two take home messages from his time in Washington, D.C.:

- When talking about graduate education, most people think about physicians, lawyers, pharmacists, etc. Rarely are graduate students and postdocs thought of as the pillars of an institution's research endeavor. The fact that graduate students

- are contributing to the knowledge base of society is often overlooked. Many people do not understand why the public should support graduate education.
- The National Science Foundation (NSF) is in the process of developing solicitations and grant funding mechanisms for PhD programs that address the need for professional development in the form of internships. PhD students and postdocs should be exposed to future employers while they are in their program. Most likely such program opportunities would receive preferential funding from federal funding agencies. As a result, the Graduate School is working on taking advantage of the Twin Cities unique location, which has the highest density of Fortune 500 company headquarters in the country and a thriving environment of non-profit government agencies. A number of other countries are already offering these opportunities, e.g., the University of Cambridge's Professional Internship for PhD Students (PIPS) - <http://bbsrcdtp.lifesci.cam.ac.uk/pips>. Besides giving graduate students the opportunity to engage with potential future employers, they also serve to facilitate the transition into both non-academic and academic positions.

Professor Konstan turned to Brett Colson to present the perspective of the postdoc experience and talk about the employment challenges they face. Mr. Colson said that differences in benefits and job classifications between the different appointments is confusing as funding support changes impacting base salaries, tax protocols, retirement plans and health insurance. In the span of six months to a year, a graduate student can easily bounce between two to three different job classifications. In addition, while research associate positions come with a number of benefits, e.g., being able to contribute to the Faculty Retirement Plan (FRP), other benefits such as student bus pass pricing are taken away. Benefits come and go with the different positions that postdocs hold. He added that postdoctoral training experiences can also change between the two appointments from postdoctoral associate to postdoctoral fellow because responsibilities for fellows are determined by the externally-funded fellowship or traineeship program.

Melissa Anderson, associate dean of graduate education, thanked the committee for the opportunity to talk about postdoc issues. She commented that she is delighted the Office of Post Doctoral Affairs is back in the Graduate School after being out of the Graduate School for a number of years. This office was established in about 2002 and was created to improve the wellbeing of postdocs on campus. In 2009, the office moved out of the Graduate School to the Office of the Vice President for Research, and, just earlier this year, it was moved back into the Graduate School.

Five years ago, said Dr. Anderson, the University of Minnesota was named by *The Scientist* magazine as the best university to be a postdoc, which was largely attributable to the work of the Office of Post Doctoral Affairs. She noted there are currently 767 postdocs at the University, 666 are postdoctoral associates (HR class 9546) and 101 are postdoctoral fellows (HR class 9560). If, however, the research associates are included in these numbers, the figure doubles. There are two job classifications for postdoctoral appointments:

- Postdoctoral associates, which are defined as “University employees who are receiving additional training while also performing service for the University, for which they are compensated. Postdoctoral associates are academic employees who conduct research, teach, or provide service that enhances career skills or allows for opportunities to learn new research and teaching techniques. They are trained by and work in conjunction with a faculty mentor who determines the training agenda.”
- Postdoctoral fellows, which are defined as “persons receiving a fellowship or training award granting a stipend and allowing for advanced study or research... Individuals appointed as postdoctoral fellows are not employees of the University and, therefore, provide no service to the University. Responsibilities are defined by the parameters of the fellowship traineeship.”  
(<http://www.policy.umn.edu/policies/hr/hiring/postdocappoint.html>)

When someone moves from one postdoctoral classification to the other, the following are impacted:

- Base salary amounts.
- Tax protocol.
- Retirement benefits.
- Health insurance benefits.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Postdoctoral Association (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/pda/pda/>) are both housed in the Graduate School, and were founded at the same time. The Postdoctoral Association is a postdoc run organization, which is advisory to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Dr. Anderson also mentioned a NSF-funded project in collaboration with 11 other CIC institutions that provides professional development and mentorship for under-represented postdocs in the STEM fields.

Dr. Anderson proceeded to highlight what the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is working on:

- Providing support to the Postdoctoral Association.
- Revising the postdoctoral handbook.
- Improving communication.
- Revamping the website.
- Planning and offering professional development workshops.
- Providing advocacy and guidance to postdocs.
- Conducting a survey to learn more about the postdoc population, including their needs and experiences.

The Postdoctoral Association, said Dr. Anderson, is extremely active and sponsors professional development activities, workshops, and social events. The organization also presents career development awards and postdoc awards.

Professor Konstan welcomed Patti Dion, director, Employee Relations & Staff Compensation, Office of Human Resources, who joined the meeting shortly after this

discussion began. He went on to ask whether it would be possible to harmonize postdoc benefits, e.g., health insurance, retirement plans, bus passes, recognizing that there may be federal rules that prohibit changes in the tax code, for example. Are there quick wins that can simplify the life of postdocs and eliminate the perception of unfairness? Dr. Schroeder said this very topic was raised yesterday at a meeting he had with the Postdoctoral Association at the University of Minnesota, and the question came up about how the University's peers are dealing with these issues. Mr. Colson noted that the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Chicago use a third party vendor, Garnett-Powers & Associates, Inc. (<http://www.garnett-powers.com/postdoc/>), a company that specializes in postdoctoral scholar benefit programs. Dr. Anderson agreed that some of the challenges may be able to be solved as quick wins. She added that employing the services of Garnett-Powers & Associates, Inc. was suggested 10 plus years ago, but there were two issues at that time:

- As part of the agreement, Garnett-Powers & Associates, Inc. wanted to take over health insurance benefits for the entire University, and the University was not interested in having them do this.
- Cost of the service.

Given it has been over 10 years since the University looked into using Garnett-Powers & Associates, Inc., Dr. Anderson proposed checking back with them. Ms. Dion agreed that it would be worth revisiting this option.

The postdoctoral fellow definition, said Professor Lanyon, sounds like the definition for a NSF graduate fellow. The University seems to have found some sort of workaround for graduate fellowships because while NSF graduate fellows are not University employees, they are not treated differently than other graduate students. Dr. Anderson said the postdoc, however, is neither a student or an employee and so does not fall into either classification. Professor Lanyon asked whether looking at how this problem was solved for graduate fellows could possibly shed light on solving the problems associated with being a postdoc. Dr. Anderson agreed to look into this further.

Professor Konstan suggested a policy be created so that in order to get postdoc training at the University an individual would have to be covered by a University postdoc health insurance plan. He requested that this be looked into further as well.

Professor Luciana commented that while the discussion is focusing on the benefit implications for postdocs, it would be more complete if the discussion included the research associate class too. It has been her experience that the postdoc associate category is nebulous in terms of how it works at the University. While postdoc positions are conceptualized as training-oriented positions, in reality, if one moves from fellow to associate, for example, the boundary between postdoc associate duties and research associate duties becomes ambiguous. In addition, when thinking about career development, granting agencies look differently on appointments with a postdoc title than a research associate title because the research associate title implicitly carries with it more clout. She proposed looking at building in more tiers within the research associate category to allow for an entry-level position because this would be a way to encourage professional growth. Dr. Schroeder noted that it is his understanding that the research

associate position does not have a training component as of now. The postdoc fellow and associate positions both have a training component and provide more protection when addressing the needs of someone transitioning from not yet being a faculty member or independent researcher, but no longer a graduate student. The research associate, on the other hand, could be in many stages of their career and not just the immediate postdoc stage. Professor Luciana replied that she does not believe this transition (between postdoc associate as an employee class and research associate) is actually happening in practice. Dr. Anderson added that given the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is back in the Graduate School, the office is able to provide services to research associates, who are included in the Postdoctoral Association. Professor Konstan suggested a clearer set of titles for the different designations.

Professor Konstan said that over the course of the year, the committee will be discussing how graduate student finances impact everything that faculty do, including mentoring students, and cited a specific example having to do with not allowing students to continue in their graduate degree program without taking credits. There are a number of examples of where a broken financial model is impinging on the faculty/student advising relationship. Dr. Schroeder reminded the committee that back in 2010, the Graduate School convened a Graduate Education Financing Task Force that generated a report that addressed this and other issues, including why graduate programs are expensive in the beginning and cheaper at the end. The current budget and tuition model drives educational goals as opposed to the reverse. Discussions are beginning to take place about the benefits of a flat fee model. Dr. Schroeder said that Provost Hanson is interested in looking at making graduate education better from a financing standpoint for both students and PIs. Professor Konstan said he looks forward to this discussion at a spring meeting.

Professor Konstan thanked Drs. Schroeder and Anderson for a good discussion.

**4. Non-tenure track and other types of faculty positions:** Professor Konstan welcomed Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Al Levine. Before beginning, Professor Konstan set the context for the discussion by noting there are many people at the University that perform various elements of faculty work, but do not hold tenure-track faculty positions for a variety of reasons. It is clear that without these people, the university would not operate. He noted that on a number of occasions it has been suggested the relationships between the various non-tenure track faculty positions be regularized/standardized, e.g., multi-year appointments, etc.

Vice Provost Levine agreed with Professor Konstan's opening remarks and noted that this is not only a topic of discussion for the University of Minnesota, but a number of other institutions are also grappling with this issue. Making a change to the current system, however, would not be easy given the multitude of categories used to describe faculty. Over the next year or so, this topic will be addressed with an eye toward simplification. He said he would be interested to hear members' thoughts on what they think about the different categories and how they are interpreted.

Members' thoughts, concerns and questions included:

- Professor Lanyon said that he is concerned there has been a proliferation of hiring non-tenure track faculty as a way avoiding hiring tenure-track faculty. Hopefully, the University is not going down this path for purely budgetary reasons by avoiding having long-term commitments to people who are doing research and teaching. He suggested standardizing the terminology around non-tenure-track faculty as well as formalizing a rationale for hiring non-tenure-track faculty.
- Ms. Bourland said it has been her experience that unit size plays a role in whether tenure-track faculty can be hired. Professor Konstan noted this is probably a decision being made by a dean about where he/she wants to invest long-term resources, rather than a University policy.
- According to Professor Buhlmann, it is useful to have a breadth of different appointment types in departments; flexibility is needed. In the end, a balance is needed between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty.
- As a graduate student, Ms. Reinert said she is being discouraged from pursuing a tenure-track position because these positions are becoming fewer and fewer. Hiring increasing numbers of non-tenure-track faculty to teach for one semester, for example, can be detrimental for students because students need longevity with instructors. She added that as more and more non-tenure-track faculty are being hired, the use of the term "faculty" needs to be clearly articulated. Often people use the term "faculty" interchangeably to refer to both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty.
- Professor Kudrle said an issue in the Humphrey School of Public Affairs is the use of the catchall title senior fellow, which the school uses for a wide variety of different personnel.
- Faculty in the BFA program through Theatre Arts and Dance are P&A employees many of whom have been with the program for years, said Mr. Price. They do service, research and teach. There are political implications when hiring non-tenure-track faculty related to the collegiate constitutions and who is and is not able to vote on certain matters. He is concerned that the University will lose good and productive employees because there is no opportunity for them to become tenure-track faculty.
- From the Department of Computer Science and Engineering perspective, noted Professor Konstan, the department could never deliver the programming it does without its non-tenure-track employees. He said he was concerned about how non-tenure-track employees are treated. Simply because these positions have a career path that does not involve research does not mean the University can avoid making these positions a rewarding career path without having to be a tenured line. Hiring non-tenure-track faculty is too easy an answer for individuals controlling the finances. There needs to be a strategic understanding of balance when it comes to enrollment. The answer is not to have only tenured and tenure-track faculty, nor is it to hire what seems appropriate at any given point in time. The answer instead is for units to develop strategic plans that balance out what they are trying to achieve.

- As Medical School faculty become increasingly diverse in terms of doing work that goes beyond clinical and basic science, Professor Gladding said more thought should be given to rationalizing the different categories of faculty work.
- Professor Luciana commented that she would like her department to be able to use contract teaching faculty as a designation, which it currently is unable to do. Secondly, she is concerned that not enough is being done to protect and encourage the career development of contract faculty who contribute at all levels. Some contract positions put faculty in an odd position in terms of advancement and developing themselves to their fullest potential.
- Among the tenured faculty in the School of Dentistry, commented Professor Skaar, there is concern about the increasing number of P&A hires.
- Professor Rhudy said that in the School of Nursing in order for advanced practice graduates (nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives and clinical nurse specialists) to be eligible for certification (required for licensure), most of the accrediting agencies have strict rules requiring courses be taught by faculty who are certified. One of the requirements for certification and recertification is clinical practice. It is not possible to maintain a clinical practice and conduct a program of research demanded by a tenure-track appointment.
- At the University of Minnesota Morris, said Professor Ng, the vast majority of faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty. She agreed with Vice Provost Levine's earlier comment that the University has a complex classification system for all employee groups, including faculty, and it is confusing.
- Ms. Reinert asked why non-tenure-track faculty doing the work of tenure-track faculty are not being hired as traditional tenure-track faculty. Vice Provost Levine said historically the State of Minnesota paid for a number of positions and tuition supplemented this funding, but this has changed over the years. While the institution would like to hire tenure-track faculty, the current funding situation makes doing so high risk. Many of the non-tenure-track faculty are paying 50%+ of their salaries from multiple grants. The University cannot ensure all faculty tenure because it could not pay them if grants started falling. It is not with intent that the University does not hire tenure-track faculty. Professor Konstan added that in terms of the financial implications of hiring tenure-track faculty, particularly in smaller units, they would be less able to handle the risk if tuition or grants went down. Additionally, almost no institutions, except for a few of the richest, have the ability to endow positions when they are created. In order to create an endowed position at the University, it would require donations of \$4 – \$4.5 million to create a professorship.

Vice Provost Levine thanked members for sharing their thoughts and concerns and noted that the input will be helpful as these discussions move forward.

Professor Kudrle asked Vice Provost Levine what issues related non-tenure-track faculty hiring he would like to solve first. Vice Provost Levine said he would like to make the system less Byzantine/complex. Simplification of the system would be his top priority.

Professor Konstan said that in the spring Vice Provost Levine will share a report summarizing the recommendations coming out the Salary Equity Review Committees (SERCs). He asked members if they would be interested in delving deeper into this issue by inviting four to five collegiate SERC members to an upcoming meeting to discuss their experiences with this process. Members agreed they would be interested in having such a discussion. Assistant Vice Provost Gram noted that the SERC process was not a gender equity review exercise and that was only one of a number of possible contributing factors to salary inequities. He added that the charge to the SERCs was to conduct a comprehensive review of all departments in their college and to look at two specific issues:

- Are there faculty whose names should be forwarded to the dean for further review and possibly an adjustment?
- Determine whether there are processes and procedures within a college that may contribute to salary inequities, e.g., retention offers, start-up packages, merit guidelines.

Vice Provost Levine added that Provost Hanson wants this process continued, and noted this was not a one-time event.

Professor Konstan said he would work with Vice Provost Levine to identify who to invite to participate in the SERC discussion.

5. **Adjournment:** Hearing no further business, Professor Konstan adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate