

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AF&T)

Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2015

[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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

[In these minutes: Discussion with Provost Hanson; Discussion of questionnaire for ITRAAC applicants]

Present: Phil Buhlmann and Teresa Kimberley (co-chairs), Cristian Cardenas Cofre, Jerry Cohen, Barbara Elliott, Al Levine, Holley Locher, Karen Miksch, Paula Rabinowitz, Nicole Scott, Nathan Shippee, Catherine Squires, Kevin Upton

Guests: Provost Karen Hanson

Others: Rachel Bergerson, Ole Gram, Derk Renwick, Naomi Scheman

Regrets: David Born, Jessica Larson

1. DISCUSSION WITH PROVOST HANSON

Professors Buhlmann and Kimberley called the meeting to order and asked for introductions. Professor Kimberley first asked Provost Hanson for an update on the procedures related to faculty moving appointment homes, which were recently approved by the committee.

- Provost Hanson commented that she was not sure why the following item was included in the procedures:
 - “Final transfers to any new appointment home must be approved by the senior vice president for academic affairs and provost.”
 - Dr. Gram explained that this was retained from the memo written by Provost Sullivan and it is no longer relevant. Members agreed to remove the final item of the procedures and Dr. Levine said they would be posted in a few weeks.

Professor Kimberley then asked the Provost if she would share her opinion on the March 13, 2015 AF&T discussion about International Travel Risk Assessment and Advisory Committee (ITRAAC) procedures and policies.

The minutes of this discussion are located here: <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/172083>

- Provost Hanson stated that it was positive to have the discussion. She believes that the application process is very useful and it adds value, as the applicants work out in detail their support systems. She said she does not believe the application itself is an infringement on academic freedom, and added that she understands why there is concern

regarding the timeline of the process. She does not believe it is onerous and has not seen it lead to the delays and refusals that some have mentioned.

- Professor Kimberley said that from the discussion, she identified that the key issues were whether there should be final approval at all by ITRAAC, and the need to make the process clear and transparent from the beginning. In her opinion, there are some parts of the process that could be made more efficient and therefore be received better by potential applicants.

Provost Hanson asked if there are specific questions on the form that are an issue. Professor Buhlmann said that the concerns are not with the actual form, but the several revisions that are requested before it is officially submitted to ITRAAC. He said that it would be helpful to have more information in regard to the average experience of the students undertaking the application process; one anecdote is likely not representative of the process. Provost Hanson responded that she agreed that this would be helpful to understand, as she only sees applications after submission.

- Professor Scheman asked where graduate students fit in, because in her opinion, making them ask for permission seems to treat them more as undergraduate students.
- Provost Hanson explained that ITRAAC treats graduate students differently from undergraduate students because their research is not part of a program that is managed, in contrast to undergraduate study abroad programs. She added that graduate students are part of a middle category, with additional independence, but they are not exactly faculty. She continued, if the student is undertaking a new area of study, this could mean that the adviser would not necessarily be the expert. This is a situation when ITRAAC is helpful in adding additional expertise because, while the members have an administrative role, this is not the only way their expertise functions.

Professor Miksch said that it seemed that the AF&T-approved policy from 2014 took the value of the process into account by still requiring an application. She explained that the consequences of an ITRAAC denial are very serious, a student cannot use the research towards a dissertation and they cannot receive IRB approval.

Professor Kimberley posed the question: If the denials do not really happen, then why does the process need to result in approval or denial? Provost Hanson responded that for most applicants, the benefit is in developing the contingency plan.

Members asked a series of questions that could be explored in the future:

- Is it possible for students to go through the process, while still receiving final approval from their advisers?
- If the approval or denial is required, why does the student then need to be punished by not having funding or the ability to use the research?
- What if this became a notice of intent to travel? There could be incentive to completing the forms by then having the ability to receive travel insurance. If you do not fill out the forms, the insurance is not granted.

Provost Hanson commented that it is important for consideration for the student's wellbeing to be considered separately from the academic factors. She emphasized that it is worth revisiting the process, but reminded members that denials are not frequent.

Professor Kimberley then asked Provost Hanson for her opinion on the future discussion of the policy [Academic Appointments with Teaching Functions](#), which states the following:

In addition, the collegiate plan must include a specific supplemental plan for any unit in which the number of FTE contract faculty positions (category 2A) plus the number of FTE academic professional positions with primary responsibility for teaching (category 4A) exceeds 25% of the FTE tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Professor Kimberley explained that this has been identified as an issue that will need to be discussed more broadly than just AF&T. She has observed that the University is not addressing this formally, so she asked the provost how or who should address this issue. One rule clearly does not fit all units, but each unit should have a way to arrive at their ideal ratio. If units were charged to develop a plan for determining this ratio, with consultation from the faculty, staff, and students, individual plans could be developed.

- Provost Hanson said that she believes it would be positive to first simplify the faculty with teaching functions classification system. This could aid the discussions for each unit. She agrees that there needs to be cohesive guidance from the University, but this needs to be balanced with the needs of the individual units.
- Professor Rabinowitz commented that this issue affects tenure, as the number of tenured faculty is continually reduced. She agreed that it is essential to clarify the categories, and that it should be done with oversight at the institutional level.
- Professor Upton commented that he sees an academic freedom issue because, as a non-tenured faculty member, there is a limit to being able to develop curriculum freely and be involved in critical discourse. Non-tenured faculty members are affected by not having guaranteed employment.
- Members discussed that they would like to view the results of the P&A Engagement Survey because it could reveal that this is an issue across the University.
- Dr. Levine mentioned that there is an economic piece that has not been discussed. There has to be a smaller faculty, as funding fluctuates as a result of student enrollment. Professor Upton suggested that since the budget is determined biennially, there should at least be two-year contracts. Provost Hanson agreed that the contracts should be at least two years in duration.
- Professor Shippee pointed out that the balance between economic, academic freedom, and tenure variables changes across each category of employment.

Professor Buhlmann said that while this is a charge of the committee, it would not likely be discussed only by AF&T. How should others be involved in the discussion?

- Provost Hanson agreed that there would need to be a delicate balance in consulting with faculty and non-tenure track faculty. She is alarmed to hear that having critical discussions is being limited in the classroom as a result of employee classifications. She added that this also has financial implications, as funding is not guaranteed.

Professor Elliott suggested that AF&T submit a proposal to FCC to create a task force or work group to look at the tenure and non-tenure balance.

- Provost Hanson agreed that a more inclusive approach would be positive. This discussion could also include the issue of contract length and funding issues.

Professor Kimberley asked Provost Hanson for her opinion on items AF&T should address next year.

- Provost Hanson explained that the implementation of the Strategic Plan would involve faculty discussion around several topics, such as having a different approach to public engagement work and how this is valued in individual units. Another topic will be relationships with local corporations and ensuring that they do not infringe on academic freedom.

Professor Kimberley thanked Provost Hanson for meeting with the committee and Professor Buhlmann introduced the next topic.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ITRAAC PERMISSION APPLICANTS

Professor Buhlmann explained that there are two issues associated with ITRAAC: should it exist in its current form and, when staff members work with student applicants, is this an efficient process? He explained that the goal of this discussion is aimed at addressing the latter. They would like to find out how large of an issue the application process is and how useful it is to the students. They would like to collect information from students that have undertaken the application process. Members then had the following questions and comments:

- Selection bias could be an issue.
- As they are gathering information, could this include the students that started the application, but chose not to complete it? How many applications? The statement that no one is denied is contingent on those that have applied. This does not include the chilling effect for those that found the process to be onerous and did not complete it. The degree to which there is a high approval rate is meaningful.
- Also ask advisers and DGSs their perspective.
- There is some concern about the impact of ITRAAC on recruiting.
- It can be seen as insulting to tell those that are traveling home that the process still applies to their research, despite the fact that they would like to conduct research in their home country.
 - Gather demographic information, were you applying to go home?
 - Add the question: Was the application culturally applicable to the country you were traveling to?
- What should the process be if it were detached from an approval or denial result? Ask respondents: If it were only an advisory process, what would you think?

Members then discussed the next steps as related to the governance process:

- Should the ITRAAC proposal be taken to the Faculty Senate for a vote?
 - Should the proposal be changed to address the delays students experience waiting for their application to get to ITRAAC?

Members agreed that they should possibly add more to the proposal, so it is not yet ready to be sent to the Faculty Senate.

Members discussed decoupling the issues of approval and issues related to the process. A member commented, if you remove the possible denial, the chilling effect of the process still exists.

Professor Buhlmann said that this would be brought up again in May. He hopes to have results from the survey for the next meeting.

In closing, Professor Kimberley reminded members that the goal is not to get rid of the process, but to make it more efficient.

Hearing no further business, Professors Buhlmann and Kimberley adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
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