

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, March 24, 2005
1:15 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Mary Jo Kane (chair pro tem), Gary Balas, Jean Bauer, Charles Campbell, Carol Chomsky, Tom Clayton, Gary Davis, Dan Feeney, Emily Hoover, Morris Kleiner, Kathleen Krichbaum, Scott Lanyon, Judith Martin, Fred Morrison, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Martin Sampson, John Sullivan
- Absent: Marvin Marshak
- Guests: Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost E. Thomas Sullivan; Professor David Born (chair, Grievance Advisory Committee)
- Other: Kathryn Stuckert (Office of the Chief of Staff)

[In these minutes: (1) docket review; (2) legislative update; (3) discussion with Provost Sullivan; (4) faculty ombuds office; (5) business items; (6) approach to strategic planning]

1. Docket Review

Professor Kane convened the meeting at 1:15, explained that Professor Marshak was out of town, and asked Committee members to review the docket of the Faculty Senate. The Committee approved the docket.

2. Legislative Update

Professors Morrison and Sampson provided an update on the situation at the Capitol vis-à-vis funding, the "academic bill of rights," and other matters.

3. Discussion with Provost Sullivan

The Committee met with Provost Sullivan for half an hour and discussed a number of matters:

- the strategic positioning process, including what has happened since he took office, the role of teaching in the process, and what has happened with strategic planning over the last 20 years;
- the locus of responsibility for setting faculty salaries; and
- the announcement concerning the stadium and funding provided by TCF Corporation.

Professor Kane thanked Provost Sullivan for joining the meeting.

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4. Faculty Ombuds Office

Professor Kane welcomed Professor Born, chair of the Grievance Advisory Committee, to the meeting and explained that the question the Committee wished to pose was why there is no faculty ombuds office.

Professor Born said that before he became chair, the Grievance Advisory Committee was charged to look at the issue of a faculty ombuds person as well as the University's grievance policy. The discussion that came out of that review led in the direction of conflict resolution and allowing more user-friendly access to the grievance process. It is the feeling that the new process could serve faculty and other employees as they deal with employment-related concerns. The recommendations needed to be budget-neutral, given the financial situation. There was agreement that they would monitor the new process during the first year to see to what extent faculty avail themselves of it. If, after a year, it seems not to be responding to faculty concerns, they will re-think the issue of the faculty ombudsperson. In the presentations they made across the campus, however, there appeared to be a consensus that they should take the conflict resolution approach and see how it works. He noted that the new process has only been in place for about a month, so it is premature to reach any conclusions.

In order to know if it is working, Professor Chomsky said, they will need to be sure that faculty know about the process and that there are avenues that funnel inquiries to the new office. This is something that has been talked about for years, but there have been problems with creating a faculty ombuds office that is only answerable to the faculty but housed in the administration. She said she hoped that the new approach works but added that it will be important people know there is a place they can turn to. Professor Born said they recognize that notification of the faculty is a critical step and that it's also a major challenge. While distributing information and making it available via the internet is helpful, unless people have an immediate concern, they may not pay attention to the services being promoted. Since grievance units only know about the problems which come to their attention, it's always difficult to know if appropriate levels of awareness have been attained. One outgrowth of the recent effort by the conflict resolution working group (which played a significant role in developing the new process) was cross-fertilization between units—grievance service providers are now more aware of which units are handling which types of complaints and referrals can be more effective as a result. Joint publicity efforts by all units should also help increase employee awareness. Professor Born indicated they will be addressing the problem of keeping the faculty informed, with the caveat that it is difficult to know how effective the process is since they don't have a good handle on the scope of the problem.

Professor Kleiner noted that Vice President Carrier's office has conducted an attitude survey of employees, and plans future surveys of faculty. It would be interesting to ask if faculty know of their grievance rights. Professor Born said they have talked with Vice President Carrier about getting questions in the survey in order to have information about what is happening. They have also talked about how to assess the new process.

Professor Campbell said the juxtaposition of this discussion with strategic planning was interesting. One major element of the strategic positioning process is faculty culture. The Committee should promote the notion that the grievance process, or a faculty ombuds office, is a common good and be sure that it is something the remodeled budget structure can fund.

More important than knowing their rights, Professor Bauer said, is knowing where to go. Following additional discussion about communication with the faculty, Professor Chomsky said that if

someone has a problem, they can start at one place and be directed to where they need to be. It is important there be one place for people to start, an office that can advise people where to go next (e.g., for a tenure matter, to the Judicial Committee). They have tried to address this question in two ways, Professor Born said: (1) in marketing the new policy, they established the Office of Conflict Resolution as a clearinghouse (Ms. Chalmers, the Grievance Officer, will channel problems appropriately), and (2) as a result of the conflict resolution working group, individuals in several offices informed each other about the work they do so they can do a better job of referral among offices.

Professor Feeney said that as one who has been involved in this effort for a number of years, he wanted to extend a sincere thanks to Professor Born and his colleagues for getting this work done. Professor Born said they will try to gauge where they are in six or nine months and let the Committee know.

5. Business Items

The Committee agreed on the names of individuals to serve on the Faculty Academic Oversight Committee for Intercollegiate Athletics; Professor Kane said she would consult with the President about the individuals, as the bylaw requires.

The Committee agreed on the names of individuals to be nominated for the Nominating Committee. Professor Martin agreed to contact them.

6. Approach to Strategic Planning

The Committee next discussed how it would approach the strategic planning process once the recommendations have been released by the President on March 30. A number of points were made:

- FCC would look carefully at the process used to consult on the recommendations once they have been released, to ensure that it is fair and that faculty are involved.
- FCC would host faculty forums to provide individual faculty the chance to express their views and will also provide a place where faculty can send messages (i.e., emails or a website).
- FCC should be consulted about the membership of any task forces that may be appointed pursuant to the strategic planning recommendations.
- The Tenure Committee should look at questions of and do a little pamphlet about the protections and procedures provided by the tenure code.
- FCC should ensure that other Senate committees are appropriately involved in discussions of the recommendations.

Professor Kane adjourned the meeting at 3:10.

-- Gary Engstrand