

Minutes*

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS
Thursday, December 14, 1995
3:15 - 5:00
Dale Shephard Room

Present: Dan Feeney (chair), Carole Bland, Carol Chomsky, Mary Dempsey, Richard Goldstein, Richard McGehee, James Stone

Regrets: Carol Carrier, Robert Fahnhorst, Judith Gaston, Roland Guyotte, Kinley Larntz, Sam Myers, Kevin O'Laughlin, Bernard Selzler

Absent: Cheryl Coryea, Ken Roering, Yang Wang

Guests: John Adams (Chair, Tenure Liaison Committee)

Other: Martha Kvanbeck

[These minutes contain the final decision on the Advocacy Program, and discussion on tenure.]

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda and the November 30, 1995 minutes were unanimously approved.

2. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Retirement Subcommittee: Professor Feeney passed around a letter that was sent to the President (forwarded to personnel from the Office for the Vice President for Finance and Operations) from the current chair of the retirees group. Professor Feeney explained that context in which the letter was sent as well as its content.

Payroll Merger: Professor Feeney said that he drafted a letter for Carl Adams (Chair, FCC) regarding SCFA's discussion on the payroll merger (November 30, 1995 meeting). Many of the committee members said that they had not received this letter. The letter described the fact that the payroll merger plan, as it is currently configured, did not sit well with SCFA, and asked FCC to address this matter. Those attending this meeting stated that Carl Adams may not have received the letter either because he did not mention it at the FCC meeting earlier in the day. Professor Feeney indicated that letter would be sent to everyone again.

3. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION OF THE FACULTY ACADEMIC STAFF ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The committee reviewed a letter that Professor Feeney drafted stating that SCFA supports reinstating the Advisory Office as it appeared under the former leadership of Dr. Maureen Venters.

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Professor Feeney explained to the committee how the former office was temporarily closed and how it differs from the Grievance Offices. The committee continued discussion by deliberating if SCFA should move the proposal forward to FCC. Several groups members assured SCFA that the role of the office would not be to serve in official advocacy positions. Rather, it would be to act in an advisory/confidante role. SCFA unanimously approved a motion to send the proposal forward to FCC.

4. TENURE DISCUSSION

Professor Dempsey explained that the Administration has provided a “tight” time-frame in which the tenure issue must be resolved -- Spring 1996. She proposed publishing the agendas of meetings in which tenure would be discussed for the purpose of involving more people. Publishing venues could include the Daily, Kiosk, Brief, and other newspapers. The topics being considered include:

- * Assessing the location of tenure,
- * Coupling, or lack thereof, of salary base with tenure at 100%,
- * Coupling of tenure to the appointment base (i.e., Should the University have the ability to lower the percentage of one’s appointment?),
- * Streamlining removal for cause procedures,
- * Providing flexibility of probationary periods by unit,
- * Enhancing the use of post-tenure reviews,
- * Considering the policies on non-regular appointments (i.e., T appointments),
- * Separating policies and procedures in the Tenure Code,
- * Reviewing the proportion of faculty who can expect to be tenured,
- * Streamlining the process of granting tenure, and
- * Determining to whom should tenure be applied.

Professor John Adams said that FCC had asked Sr. V. P. Enfante why the University is needing to push this issue through so quickly. He responded by saying that the University must deal with the tenure situation promptly so that it does not “cloud” other issues that need to be addressed (i.e., dealing with the public/legislature -- biennial request). Professor Adams said that he thought that the faculty should make an effort to address this issue swiftly rather than having it last for several years. He recommended informing the Faculty Senate at the January 11, 1996 meeting of the continuing discussion, of the issues under consideration, and of the proposed timeline.

The Tenure Liaison Committee asked Professor Adams to produce a paper that will include:

- * A lists of the issues being considered
- * A description of why each of these items is being considered
- * A discussion on how universities throughout the country are responding to these issues
- * A presentation of alternative responses to items
- * The most feasible recommendations that respond to the issues while also protecting faculty and their research.

This paper must be completed by January 11, 1996 (University Senate meeting).

It is hoped that the April 18, 1996 Faculty Senate meeting will include a discussion of the proposed direction with which the faculty will proceed regarding tenure. Differences can be worked out

between April 18 and the May 2 (docket deadline for the May 16 Faculty Senate meeting). It is hoped that a proposal on changes to the Tenure Code can go before the Faculty Senate for action at the May 2 meeting.

Professor Adams provided additional defense for why the University needs to be responsive to the call from Administration to address tenure. Professor Dempsey recommended that the committee members get a copy of the schedule detailed by Professor Adams as in a letter by Chief of Staff, Professor Mario Bognanno.

Professor Adams asked the committee for their comments on all that he had described. The ensuing exchange included the following items:

- * The conversation of tenure is in the public arena (public radio, etc.). Therefore, it is important for the University faculty to take a proactive stance on the issue. On the other hand, rushing the process is unsettling.
- * We who are University senators will eventually have to vote on whatever changes are decided. The Tenure Code is established to facilitate the exploration and discovery of truths. How will a change in the Code alter the goal of a research university, and therefore, how should a senator vote on whatever is proposed? This should be part of the discussion, because we must make a good decision. If a sunset was put on the changes, there would be the opportunity to halt the changes if they proved to be detrimental for the University.
- * Sr. V. P. Enfante has proposed a 50/50 ratio (overall) of tenure track and non-tenure tracked faculty.
- * Many other universities offer tenure at the departmental level. Currently, this University provides tenure at the institutional level. This requires the University to retain faculty from closed departments (or coordinate campuses).
- * It is important for this discussion to occur in a public forum. This will allow the faculty to get a comprehensive picture of how people think the University will appear in the future.
- * The Senate constitution was approved by the Board of Regents which requires the Regents to present items (such as change to the Tenure Code) to the Senate before taking action.
- * There are no plans of dismissing any faculty.
- * There seems to be an industrial model that is driving this discussion in that the University has a bottom line and a customer base which need to be satisfied. There is a social element that seems to be missing in this type of model.
- * It is difficult procedurally to remove tenured faculty members who are unproductive under the current system. The current Tenure Code does not even mention incompetence as a rationale for dismissal. Peer review was recommended as a method to deal with this problem.

The group continued discussing factors relating to the difficult position the University is in as it tries to promote research and scholarship given the financial challenges it faces. Professor Adams said that he also wanted to get SCFA's opinion on separating base salary from augmentations to base salaries:

- * Under the current Tenure Code, the University cannot allow temporary faculty to be retained through the use of recurring contracts. These situations do exist in spite of the rule. There are cases where this is in the best interest of the party involved and the University. The Task Force on Human Resources, chaired by Chuck Denny, is examining issues like this as well. New types of contractual agreements may be appropriate.

- * How could the separation between salaries occur? This does occur in the Medical School with faculty who are involved in private practice plans at the Hospital. One could “buy out” of a teaching load through money dedicated to a research project. It may be more difficult to envision this in a discipline that does not traditionally generate external grant funding.
- * Korean and Japanese universities provide augmentation through an end of the year bonus. Otherwise the University could rely on ancient practices of passing around a hat to the students.

Dr. Feeney said that SCFA would dedicate the 4:15 - 5:00 period of its meetings to tenure discussions until the matter is resolved. Professor Adams recommended a series of open forums for faculty to discuss tenure. It was decided that the January 4 SCFA meeting would be used to preview some of the findings in Professor Adams’s paper and prepare for reviewing the issues at the University Senate meeting on January 11. Professor Feeney recommended holding public forums, one within a few days after the January 11 Senate meeting and another in early February before the Senate meeting of February 15. Another recommended connecting the coordinate campuses for these forums. Professor Adams said that he would schedule the forums with the Clerk of the Senate.

A committee member recommended producing a one page list of the issues related to tenure for the University faculty. This page could also include the dates of the forums and the Senate meetings. Other ideas to facilitate this discussion included:

- * Distribute information to faculty and department heads,
- * Organize a process whereby people may add to the discussion without attending events, and
- * Invite Professor Fred Morrison, Maureen Smith (Brief), staff from the Daily, etc. to the January 4 SCFA meeting.

-- Kevin Gormley

University of Minnesota