

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Tuesday, October 24, 2000
3:07 – 5:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Richard Goldstein (chair), Josef Altholz, Avner Ben-Ner, Carole Bland, Carol Carrier, Robert Fahnhorst, Daniel Feeney, John Fossum, Robert Jones, Charlene Mason, James Perry, Dwight Purdy, Tom Walsh, Carol Wells, Lisa Wersal

Regrets: Cleon Melsa, Wade Savage

Absent: Joan Howland, Larry Miller, Theodore Oegema, George Seltzer, Sheila Warness

[In these minutes: legal waiver required of faculty going on phased retirement; tuition benefits for employees; Human Resources Self Service; parking priority for probationary faculty; overpayments to employees; surveying departing faculty; survey of departments about post-tenure review results]

1. Various Items of Business

Professor Goldstein convened the meeting at 3:07 and began by reviewing the membership of the subcommittees. He asked for volunteers for the Benefits Subcommittee, chaired by Professor Fossum; he noted that members of subcommittees need not be members of SCFA.

Professor Goldstein next mentioned a legal waiver that individuals who go on phased retirement are required to sign. He said he has been told that the waiver has been around for a number of years but he had not seen it before. It appears that one waives all rights to sue the University; he said he only mentioned it today and would refer it to the Retirement Subcommittee. He asked Vice President Carrier if there had been any lawsuits; she said she did not know of any. He said the statement appeared to him to extremely limit the individual's rights and said he has also asked Professor Morrison for advice.

On the matter of tuition benefits for children of employees, the Provost told the Faculty Consultative Committee that it was a dead issue at this point. Professor Goldstein said he told Dr. Bruininks that Professor Fossum did a lot of work and deserved a studied response. Professor Feeney recalled that the President, at the Senate meeting, had said this was a good idea that could be addressed later but that the University cannot move ahead on it now when it faces increased health care costs and salary needs.

Tuition benefits could affect the outcome of negotiations in recruitment and retention of faculty, Professor Altholz noted. That is touchy, Professor Goldstein responded; in some schools, only one class of employees (e.g., faculty) receive tuition benefits for children, but it would be unacceptable for some members of that class to receive the benefit while others did not. Professor Fossum said the item was still on the agenda and that it had generated a great deal of interest.

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Professor Goldstein next commented that he has been unable to understand the numbers in the biennial request associated with increased health care costs. Professor McGehee tried to explain them to FCC but they were still not clear. He said he would like an explanation of the request, including how much of the increased cost will be paid by non-state funds (e.g., research funds). Part of the request, Mr. Fahnhorst and Dr. Carrier explained, is to make up for deficits in the current year plus increases the next two years; the University cannot accurately estimate the total each year.

Professor Goldstein said he had also asked Professor Marshak what the total cost of academic salaries are; he was told about \$200 million. A 10% increase would thus be of the order of \$20 million, which seems small compared to the numbers that are actually in the biennial request. He said he hoped to have a report on those numbers as well.

2. Human Resources Self Service

Professor Goldstein turned next to Dr. Carrier, who introduced Eric Schnell to lead a discussion of Human Resources Self Service, a web service provided to employees so they can track and manage their human resources questions and issues. Mr. Schnell presented a series of slides to the Committee showing the web site and how it will be able to be used. Among the points raised in the presentation and comments were these:

-- One of the goals of the HR web site is to provide a lot of ways to get to other web sites so people can get the information they need.

-- Information on flexible spending accounts, for those who use them, will be available (dependent care reimbursement, health care reimbursement); so will payroll data. Various reporting reminders will be made (e.g., AREPA). It will be possible to send an email to people reminding them that there is something in their HR self-service file to which they need to respond. (It is not assumed that people will check their site every day but they are trying to put enough interesting and useful information on it that people WILL check it frequently.)

-- This could be used as an orientation tool for new faculty.

-- The information on the site is considered quite secure; it is encrypted and requires both an X.500 ID and a password to get at. Many people set up their computers so that access to information is transparent; in that case it would be accessible to anyone using the computer.

-- It is expected that the system will be operating in January, 2001.

-- There have been 30-40 meetings with various groups of users to obtain views; Professor Goldstein suggested that faculty on SCFA who have volunteered to help should be called upon. Mr. Schnell and Dr. Carrier said they would welcome advice from the Committee about what should be included and what priority should be given to various information elements.

-- Some colleges have developed systems to make the web more usable for faculty; there could be more interaction with the colleges to learn what they are doing as well as links to the college sites.

-- Although it is not possible now to link directly with external vendors (e.g., for retirement plan information from Minnesota Mutual or Vanguard), it may be in the future. Committee members urged this be pursued. It would also be possible to get transit maps and traffic information from an external source--so one could figure out the drive home at the end of the day.

-- The site will provide information to help faculty manage their lives as faculty members, including such things as the names of students they have agreed to advise, financial information, accounts with their names on them, and so on. Once available, it can also be customized. (Committee members liked the idea that it might also include pictures of students!)

Professor Goldstein thanked Dr. Carrier and Mr. Schnell for the presentation and invited them to return to the Committee in January, when the new web site will (presumably) be functioning.

3. Academic Vacation Tracking

Professor Goldstein next noted for Dr. Carrier that one department administrator had raised objections to requiring vacation tracking for P&A staff because it would take a great deal of time and effort with little return. It was agreed that this issue would be brought back to the Committee at a later date.

4. Parking Priority

Professor Goldstein mentioned again the issue of providing priority on the parking lists for probationary faculty. He noted that in some departments, emeriti faculty who do not use their contract parking spots will give them to junior faculty but that it would not be useful to tie the Regents' policy on emeriti faculty (which includes providing them with parking) to the issue of parking for probationary faculty. Probationary faculty get a good job at the University, may receive a lot of money for a set-up, but they have no place to park, he exclaimed!

Priority, Professor Feeney noted, simply means they are placed higher on the waiting list for contract parking that is reasonably near the building in which they work. In some cases, probationary faculty cannot get ANY contract parking, near or not.

5. Overpaying People

Professor Ben-Ner reported that he was aware of instances when people had been overpaid, sometimes by substantial amounts, because of problems with PeopleSoft. Will this problem be resolved?

Dr. Carrier said the University has had far fewer problems of this sort with PeopleSoft than it did with the legacy payroll system. She said that while she did not know about these particular problems, there will always be a few minor glitches that will need attention.

6. Faculty Who Depart the University

Dr. Carrier reported that her office is looking at exit interviews of faculty who leave the University; what colleges have good plans in place, she asked?

Professor Goldstein said that in his department such interviews are informal. In his experience, he added, most faculty leave not for a better POSITION but because they are unhappy.

Penn State uses retired faculty to conduct the interviews, Dr. Carrier said. People seem to be more open to talking with them than to someone in their department. Professor Altholz suggested that those conducting the interview also come from a different field, although in the same college.

Professor Bland said she liked the idea of using retired faculty and was thrilled to hear that someone will do the interviews. The Medical School has lost 100 faculty in the last few years and has no data on why they left, only rumors.

7. Post-Tenure Review Survey

The Committee next reviewed with Vice Provost Jones a draft survey instrument to be sent to departments to report post-tenure review outcomes. Committee members made a number of suggestions to improve the document. Among the points made were these:

- Some of the information called for will not be available until next year.
- There is only one positive item on the list; the rest are punitive. That needs to be changed. The document is intended to capture outstanding performance.
- In cases where the unit has not conducted post-tenure reviews, Dr. Jones will need to ask pointedly for the information. The survey assumes departments are in compliance with the tenure code requirements.
- The post-tenure review, in many if not most departments, will be a part of the annual review.
- The information is only for internal use--for the college to collect and pass to the Executive Vice President.

It was agreed that Professors Feeney and Fred Morrison should meet with Dr. Jones for a final review of the survey. It is important that this be done correctly, Professor Goldstein emphasized, so that it produces good data. It was also agreed that a revised form would be brought back to the Committee at its next meeting.

Professor Goldstein then adjourned the meeting at 5:00.

-- Gary Engstrand