

Minutes*

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS
Thursday, February 1, 1996
3:15 - 5:00
238 Morrill Hall

Present: Dan Feeney (chair), Carole Bland, Carol Carrier, Carol Chomsky, Cheryl Coryea, Mary Dempsey, Robert Fahnhorst, Judith Gaston, Roland Guyotte, Kinley Larntz, Richard McGehee, Kevin O'Laughlin, Bernard Selzler, Shane Swanson

Regrets: Richard Goldstein, Carol Miller, Sam Myers, James Stone

Absent: Yang Wang

Guests: GAPSA Representatives -- Tom Foster, Wendy Grebner, and Kathy James

Others: John Adams (Chair, Tenure Working Group, Dan Farber (Member, Tenure Working Group), Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate), Fred Morrison (SCFP Chair), Naomi Scheman (EEOWC Chair)

[In these minutes is a report from the Non-retirement Benefits Subcommittee, and discussions on administrative review procedures and on the tenure issue as it relates to graduate students.]

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

Professor Feeney informed the committee that there was an upcoming meeting of the Student/Staff/Faculty Advisory Subcommittee of the Regents on Wednesday, February 7 that would include a discussion on tenure. He recommended all attend.

Academic Staff Advisory Committee (ASAC): SCFA had an inactive member of the committee assigned to ASAC. Therefore, he requested for faculty members of the committee to express interest to him. Otherwise, he would need to volunteer someone.

Salary Distribution: Information is continuing to flow regarding University provisions to distribute a nine month salary over a 12 month period. Associate Vice President Carol Carrier said that a meeting had been scheduled with ORTTA representatives to talk about the grant implications of this type of arrangements.

Change to Semesters: Professor Laura Koch (SCEP Chair) will be joining SCFA on March 7 to discuss the change to semesters and the impact it may have on faculty workloads.

Professor Feeney introduced the new graduate student member to the committee, Shane Swanson (Law), and welcomed him to the group.

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

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The January 4 and January 18, 1996 minutes were approved as amended.

3. REPORT OF THE NON-RETIREMENT BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEE

Ms. Judith Gaston said that the subcommittee has two meetings scheduled in February to re-write the Disabilities Policy and Procedures document. Copies of all related material were sent to all SCFA members along with an invitation to join the subcommittee's discussions if one is interested. A representative from the Academic Staff Advisory Committee will also be joining the upcoming discussions. Professor Fred Morrison has provided some issues that should be examined within this document. Robert Fahnhorst said that Human Resources is working on a new contract with Minnesota Mutual. Therefore, this is an appropriate time to renegotiate the disability coverage. He provided details on insurance coverage for active faculty pertaining to benefits available if one experienced disabling injuries.

The subcommittee also plans on reviewing a discount program for staff (for local services and entertainment). A letter has been sent to Allen Anderson (Alumni Association) to get information on the program the Association has for alumni. Ms. Gaston said that there is no need to "re-invent the wheel" since a program like this could be adapted for staff. She also plans to meet with a large employer that has a discount program.

Finally, Ms. Gaston asked the SCFA members to rank the issues that the subcommittee plans on reviewing. This was done to provide some direction for the subcommittee regarding faculty perspective of the issues.

Professor Feeney said that SCFA members are welcome to introduce items to the subcommittee that are not being considered to date. Ms. Gaston added that additional membership to the subcommittee would be welcome.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES

Professor Carol Chomsky reviewed the discussion from the previous meeting. One committee member was concerned about how the issue of anonymity was resolved. Dr. Carrier said that peer level reviews would require signatures (e.g., Sr. V. P. Joanne Jackson would sign a review of Sr. V. P. Infante). Several members from the committee planned on getting together to discuss this matter further and would report back to SCFA.

5. TENURE DISCUSSION

Professor Feeney said that he responded to Professor John Adams per the January 18 SCFA discussion on tenure. If committee members are at odds with the content of the letter, they may reply to Professor Feeney or write Professor Adams (please carbon copy to the remaining members of the SCFA e-mail list).

Professor Dempsey said that the Tenure Subcommittee may be able to expeditiously address several of the 12 questions being considered in the review of tenure. Professor Feeney said that he would provide time at an upcoming meeting for the subcommittee to review these ideas with SCFA (45 minutes). She also recommended that SCFA meet with the Judicial Committee (1 hour).

Kathy James (GAPSA President) introduced other members from her organization -- Wendy Grebner and Tom Foster. Ms. Grebner distributed material to the entire group and explained that graduate students believe that they should be included in the tenure discussions for number of reasons. This is especially the case because graduate students are prospective junior faculty and can offer a unique perspective on how they would like to see the faculty role develop. Also, universities across the nation are watching what is developing at the University of Minnesota. This may affect the future job market for graduate students seeking faculty positions throughout the country.

(A) Academic Freedom

Ms. Grebner said that the graduate students have not developed any resolutions or proposed solutions. Rather, they have assembled a number of questions on subjects including academic freedom:

- * How is academic freedom defined?
- * What does academic freedom mean in practice?
- * How is academic freedom misused?
- * Who protects graduate students from abusive faculty?

SCFA responses to graduate student questions:

Q Is there a concern that academic freedom will be undermined with revision of the Tenure Code?
A That is one concern. If a faculty member is answering to an administrator with short term views, academic freedom may be severely influenced. Controversial subjects may be taught and long term research projects may be conducted in the current arrangements. Without tenure, the University is likely to experience the "industrial research model" where output must come on a continuous basis. This undermines those working on long term research efforts.

Q How will this influence opportunities for students to disagree with faculty perspectives? How is a graduate student protected?
A Graduate students who have controversial views are likely to find faculty who agree with them in an institution that maintains academic freedom with tenure.

Other SCFA comments:

- * Academic freedom is the key reason for tenure where employment security is provided to ensure a continuous opportunities to explore ideas.
- * A preamble could be added to the current Code as to the purpose of the provisions and why they are important to the University.
- * All people at the University are protected by the academic policy outlined in the AAUP "Red Book."
- * Academic Freedom is a commitment made by an institution to foster free inquiry. This protection allows all to explore many types of ideas, including those that may be deemed unpopular. If a

faculty member encroaches on the free inquiry of a graduate student, has breached the Tenure Code, and is subject to grounds of dismissal.

A SCFA member asked the graduate students to elaborate on their concerns about protection for graduate students from potentially abusive faculty. Ms. James said that on a practical level, students are curious as to where the line is drawn between freedom of one's intellectual views as a scholar, and freedom for non-academic expressions (e.g., affective perceptions of faculty or deans). They also are interested knowing what will result from inaction by a graduate student. Finally, students are needing to know who will protect them from abusive faculty. Ms. James said that she receives calls on this point regularly. Administrators and/or, fellow faculty either cannot or will not intercede on behalf of a pressured student.

SCFA and visiting faculty comments:

- * Graduate students have freedom of speech just as any citizen does.
- * Tenure provides protection also if a faculty member wishes to express dissatisfaction (not including slander) with an administrator without reprisal. Administrators find this a difficult environment to manage.
- * Academic freedom protects a faculty member distinctly within their expression related to their academic field.
- * Coupling academic freedom and tenure is being re-emphasized among librarians because of the detriment that has occurred in this field through de-coupling.
- * The entire University community does not have academic freedom. Tenure provides a type of protection that allows academic freedom to truly exist.

Graduate students often feel that tenure presents an impenetrable barrier for working with abusive faculty, said Ms. Grebner. A committee member recommended that review of inadequate faculty include those who abuse their power over subordinates. Although the current Tenure Code provides grounds for punishing abusive faculty, in actuality, graduate students often are unable to come forward with a complaint for fear of repercussions, added Ms. Grebner. Ms. James said that graduate students have told her that departmental chairs would not help them because a person in questions was a fully tenured faculty member.

- * Try and get a University wide post-tenure review policy. This would provide a forum for students to express their opinions.
- * Administrators need to be educated about how to use their authority in such situations.

(B) Locus of Tenure

Ms. Grebner said that graduate students are also concerned about changes in the locus of tenure and how this could lead to elimination of programs. This could severely effect graduate students in the process of completing a degree. Professor Dan Farber said that the University already has the ability to close departments and transfer the faculty elsewhere. The University of Rochester chose to retain a math department, but close the graduate program. This is unrelated to the concept of tenure. Nonetheless, the University would need to handle students in the middle of a program in such a department in a responsible manner (if closing was to occur). One committee member said that changing the locus of tenure down to the departmental level prompts the administration to close departments.

(C) Diversity

Ms. Grebner followed with the question: "How might proposed changes effect the diversity of faculty at the University?" Professor Fred Morrison said that the current code requires the University to maintain diversity if a financial emergency was declared and faculty were released. He added that there is no indication that this philosophy would be changed if changes in the current policy were to occur. Problems related to this are that historical evidence shows that non-tenured faculty tend to include the greatest number of minorities. This would only increase if awarding tenure was made available only to full professors. Professor Farber added to this that tenure as a whole is adverse toward women and minorities because of increasingly aging white males. This later group has predominantly retain their jobs for long periods, thereby excluding the influence of new hiring practices. One committee member noted that diversity as it applies to tenure was established to provide for academic diversity rather than for minority peoples.

(D) Future of Tenure Track Positions

Ms. Grebner explained that graduate students are concerned about their ability to find tenure track positions upon completion of their degrees. Some students see tenure as a means of achieving security in that a person is not threatened to be looking for work on an annual basis (mobile workforce). Others see it as a barrier. Professor Farber pointed out that 50% of the teachers in higher education are not tenured. He added that strengthening the Tenure Code will not protect these individuals in what appears to be a growing phenomenon. Therefore, he said that strengthening tenure may not directly relate to the concepts of a mobile workforce. Professor Scheman said that there is a growing trend in this direction. Discussion about tenure hopefully will address this situation. Professor Morrison said that the non-regular/non-faculty instructors and researchers feel somewhat discriminated against, forced into these positions due to financial constraints.

(E) Politics and Tenure Awards

Ms. Grebner said that graduate students are interested in removing politics from tenure decisions. Professor John Adams said that as long as there are people, politics will be present. Every graduate needs to negotiate their career and their professional work in society. Therefore, all need to learn how to work through the politics without compromising their academic goals.

Ms. Grebner said that there are some situation are out of one's control -- how do we work with these situations. Professor Adams responded by saying that Promotion and Tenure Committee are typically handled in a professional and objective manner. Retrenchment causes administrators to make difficult decisions about the availability of tenure track positions. Some individuals get bypassed as a result. These are difficult situations that all operate in today.

One committee member said that it would be unfortunate if graduate students felt that tenure decisions were predominantly made in a biased manner. Ms. Grebner said that this is the perception of graduate students. Another member added that getting a tenure track position is very political. Once the position is acquired, the system functions with a minimal amount of politics. Ms. James said that students are interested in working against behaviors they do not want to see, and want to work towards those that

they do wish to see. One committee member said that the “good ole boy” syndrome is decreasing due to the growing diversity in the workforce.

A committee member asked for the graduate students to express their advice and opinions of how the revisions of the Tenure Code should be handled. Their comments were as follows:

- * Faculty need to be self managing themselves rather than relying on dictations from the Board of Regents or Administration.
- * The concept of a more flexible work force would undercut efforts toward diversity and quality graduate education.
- * Graduate students need to be involved in policy discussion to learn how the system operates. We need to learn what kind of skills are needed to be an effective faculty member.

5. NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Faculty Advisory Office: Professor Feeney said that FCC had discussed the SCFA approved proposal of re-establishing the faculty advisory office. He said that it received about 60% approval. SCFA was asked to present a financial budget for this operation. The committee was warned that there are no guarantees that FCC will approve this proposal.

-- Kevin Gormley

University of Minnesota