

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs  
Tuesday, October 11, 2011  
2:30 – 4:30  
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: George Sheets (chair), William Beeman, Ben Bornshtein, Kathryn Brown, Arlene Carney, Linda Chlan, Randy Croce, Kathryn Hanna, Joseph Konstan, Frank Kulacki, Theodor Litman, Christine Marran, Benjamin Munson, Geoffrey Sirc, James Wojtaszek

Absent: Dann Chapman, Barbara Elliott, Jason Shaw, Pamela Stenhjem

Guests: Deputy Chief of Staff Diana Harvey (President's Office); Leonard Goldfine, John Kellogg (Office of Institutional Research)

[In these minutes: (1) faculty productivity; (2) faculty and instructional P&A numbers]

**1. Faculty Productivity**

Professor Sheets convened the meeting at 2:30 and welcomed Diana Harvey, Deputy Chief of Staff in the President's Office with responsibility for University Relations. He noted that the Committee wished to confer with her following the discussion about faculty productivity at the meeting on September 13. He said that the discussion would focus on possible strategies for communication with the public about faculty productivity and about enhancing public understanding of what faculty productivity means. One point that the Committee will wish to clarify is the audience being addressed (some are more hostile or skeptical and it may be that there is more than one audience). The communications might explain what faculty do and what mechanisms of accountability exist for faculty members.

In order to have a candid conversation, Professor Sheets asked for a motion to close the meeting. The motion was made and voted unanimously.

In the course of the discussion, Committee members and Ms. Harvey touched on a number of topics and made several points.

-- Everyone is better off if the University can tell the story well.

-- The audience(s) needs to be identified. The content of the messages could focus on quality (most probably do not doubt the University on that point), whether the University is worth the money (the economic impact argument), and explaining what faculty do (there's no similar distrust of police officers or firemen/women because everyone understands what they do). The content could also focus on what is accomplished (e.g., producing the educated workforce of the state).

-- The need for faculty members to be involved with University Relations as experts.

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- There is need to use both the news and marketing sides of University Relations because the marketing side helps to build and shape the University's reputation, and faculty impact is valuable part it.
- The staff involved in government relations also need to be involved.
- There is capacity to work with University Relations and college communications staff to involve faculty in reaching opinion leaders.
- The difficulty of generalizing across the University what faculty do, so several vehicles and examples may be necessary.
- The need to help faculty members in dealing with the media.

It was agreed that a small working group, drawn from this Committee, the Faculty Consultative Committee, and Vice Provost Carney's office would work with Ms. Harvey on possible strategies to communicate about faculty productivity. Professor Sheets thanked Ms. Harvey for joining the meeting.

## **2. Faculty and Instructional P&A Numbers**

Professor Sheets next welcomed Dr. Goldfine and Mr. Kellogg to the meeting to discuss data on the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty members, P&A instructional staff, and faculty members without tenure. Dr. Goldfine had provided the Committee in advance of the meeting a table of data comparing the numbers by college from 2003 to 2010.

The Committee spent considerable time reviewing the data and discussing the fact that there are multiple data sets because there are different definitions that people use for different analytical purposes. Dr. Goldfine said that it is not that he cannot answer the question, "how many faculty do we have?" He can answer that question—but without more information on how the Committee is defining "faculty," he is forced to guess at what he believes its intended definition is. It should be noted that there are many possible definitions of who are "faculty" based on who is making the request. These data also do not track exactly with the federal IPEDS data because they have exclusions that these do not. (Although the IPEDS data, on their own terms, can be used to compare across institutions because the same definitions are used by all institutions, and the AAU also collects relatively consistent data from its members, Dr. Goldfine explained.) The data by college are also affected by changes in colleges in 2006, Dr. Carney pointed out, when colleges closed or merged and departments moved. There are also changes within colleges, such as the decision by the School of Nursing to convert its instructional P&A staff into contract faculty position; they did not, as the data might suggest, fire all the instructional P&A staff. The Carlson School refers to its instructional P&A staff as faculty members, as the Law School has done. And some units refer to P&A faculty, which is a thoroughly confusing term, Dr. Carney observed. One must also hope, with cross-institutional comparisons using IPEDS and AAU data, Dr. Goldfine cautioned, that other institutions are as meticulous as Minnesota is in entering data.

Vice President Brown commented that the discussion and the data highlight the challenge that a number of people have experienced for some time: Counting the University's faculty and staff in a meaningful way. She offered that people are counted based on terms and conditions of their employment, not on the nature of the work they perform. She explained that they (in Human Resources) are trying to look at people by what they do. Faculty carry out core mission activities (teaching, research, outreach).

Other employees have mission-support responsibilities (student services, technical support, research support). Other people provide operations support (information technology, human resources, etc.).

Vice President Brown also suggested that the Committee needed to hone a question that analysis can address. One concern is the ratio of tenured and tenure-track faculty to non-tenured/non-tenure-track faculty. It would be difficult to figure out that ratio from these data.

Professor Hanna recalled that the Committee has received similar data in the past and that they were presented in a way that made it easier to see trends. She also said that Human Resources is getting better at collecting the data and they are improving over time. Dr. Goldfine said he could provide the Committee a longitudinal analysis.

Professor Marran reported that the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure looks at college personnel plans, which contain similar data, and now Dr. Goldfine is presenting the information to this Committee. Why? Because it is concerned about changes in personnel. What is the best way to look at that question, she asked?

Dr. Carney reported that a number of administrative offices have discussed queries they receive about the number of faculty and staff, and different offices sometimes have different numbers. They are now working to develop one data set so that people do not receive different answers because they make different queries. The biggest problem is getting everyone to agree on definitions. These are good data to start the conversation, Dr. Goldfine said, and provide surface-level information.

Professor Munson said he looked at the data and found that they do not mesh with his observations. There are far fewer people, but the data do not suggest that is the case. Dr. Carney said that individual observations may not match what is happening at the institutional level.

Professor Sheets concluded that the definitions change from year to year and one cannot draw facile conclusions from them. This is a starting point for further conversations. Professor Marran agreed that the Committee needed to identify the question(s) it wants answered, and maintained that the data on faculty need to be tied to other data, such as enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students.

Professor Sheets invited Committee members to pose questions for follow up.

Professor Bornshtein asked Dr. Goldfine if he had seen a trend toward increasing numbers of non-tenured faculty appointments. Dr. Goldfine said he has not analyzed the data to answer the question. The answer will vary by year, Dr. Carney said. In the hiring-pause year, there were not a lot of tenure-track appointments, but because the teaching had to be done, departments hired contract faculty. The question is how long the impact of the hiring pause will be felt. She also emphasized that budget discussions never enter the probation-and-tenure process. The University has been giving people tenure each year and budget constraints have never been a factor in evaluating probationary faculty members. Budget issues may well arise in discussions about whether to authorize a tenure track line, but not whether to tenure an individual in a tenure-track line. Another factor is the changes in 2006, when colleges moved around, Dr. Carney said. The real question is whether these decisions affected the long-term trend. So what is needed is a qualitative analysis of the data, Professor Bornshtein said. And that is why an analysis by decades is important, Professor Kulacki said.

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Professor Sheets adjourned the meeting at 4:15.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota