
The University Senate

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Senate Committee On Faculty Affairs (SCFA) February 1, 2022 Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Welcome and Introductions; Postdoc Stipends; Resolution Concerning Graduate Assistant Mandatory Fees; Partner Hiring Process; Administrative Policy: *Emeritus/Emerita Title for Retired Faculty*]

PRESENT: Clifford Steer (chair), Sophie Beal, Avner Ben-Ner, Adolfo Carrillo Cabello, Moinak Choudhury, Shawn Curley, Bradley Deane, Katherine Dowd, Ann Fallon, Marti Hope Gonzales, Kelsey Johnson, Jenifer McGuire, Gopalan Nadathur, Victoria Osinski, Terry Roe, Rebecca Ropers, Michael Silverman, Brandon Sullivan

REGRETS: Michelle Page

ABSENT: Brandon Macho

GUESTS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs; George John, professor, Carlson School of Management, Scott Petty, graduate student, College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences

OTHERS ATTENDING: Brianna Menning, Colleen Flaherty-Manchester, Ned Patterson, Yoji Shimizu

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Clifford Steer called the meeting to order, welcomed committee members and guests, and briefly outlined the agenda.

2. Postdoc Stipends

Committee members and postdoctoral fellows Victoria Osinski and Kelsey Johnson shared a PowerPoint presentation titled [Discussion on Postdoctoral Researcher Salaries](#). Osinski said she hoped the presentation would spark discussion from the committee members, highlight what the [Postdoctoral Association](#) (PDA) is currently working on, and generate ideas on how to support postdoctoral fellows and associates at the University. Osinski outlined some of the PDA's concerns:

- Having two types of postdoc positions (fellows and associates) with different job codes, different benefits packages, different salary and taxation situations, and different procedures for handling conflict resolution, splinters the postdoc group and means it doesn't align with any of the larger subclassifications of employees that the Office of Human Resources (OHR) designates.
- Language in the Administrative Policy: [Postdoctoral Appointments](#) states:
 - “As stipulated by the awarding agency, postdoctoral fellows are not employees of the University, provide no service to the University, and as such receive no salary from the University.”
- Because postdocs are not considered students or employees they are frequently left out of mass email campaigns thereby missing important safety and other systemwide information.
- The University of Minnesota generally pays less than its regional competitors and below the salaries recommended by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
- When OHR makes an “across the board” pay increase for University employees, postdocs are not included.

The PDA’s current action plan to address these issues includes the following:

- Discussions with departmental HR units about raising postdoc salary minimums
- Meetings with OHR and the Graduate School leadership to propose changes regarding:
 - Workplace safety
 - Improving communications to the postdoctoral community
 - Updating and merging postdoc job codes and descriptions to insure that all postdocs are receiving the consistent information
 - Developing a University-wide postdoc salary report

Osinski invited questions from the committee. Kathryn Dowd noted that, as with other salaries at the University, postdoc salaries are market-driven. The need for different job codes, depending on whether the salary is paid by the University or an outside funding source, also makes the situation more complex.

In response to a question regarding support/endorsement of the PDA’s efforts by SCFA, Steer said that the committee, with additional written clarification from PDA as to its specific request(s), would continue to review the matter.

Rebecca Ropers asked if Osinski could share more information regarding discussions with representatives from OHR and the Graduate School. Osinski said the response has been positive, and there is agreement that the system is somewhat confusing. The recommended first step was to look at salaries and compile the research. PDA representatives have made data requests and have not yet received the requested information.

Brandon Sullivan, director, Leadership and Talent Development, OHR, thanked the presenters and said the Administrative Policy: [Postdoctoral Appointments](#) is to begin its comprehensive review this spring. Both Sullivan and Steer said they would contact the presenters regarding their concerns after today’s meeting.

3. Resolution Concerning Graduate Assistant Mandatory Fees

George John, professor, Carlson School of Management, and Scott Petty, graduate student, College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, shared their revised [Resolution Concerning Graduate Assistant Mandatory Fees](#) that was originally presented for consultation to SCFA at its December 7, 2021, meeting. John explained that the resolution is asking for the administration to change its policy so that mandatory fees are deducted from the net amount graduate assistants receive as they begin their appointment.

Steer opened the floor for questions. Moinak Choudhury said that, as an international graduate student, he was appreciative of the efforts toward creating the resolution. He asked if there had been engagement regarding the resolution with the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) and the Council of International Graduate Students (CIGS), and if not, that it might be an important step to consider as part of the consultation process before faculty endorses it.

Petty noted that CIGS is aware that the resolution is working its way through the senate for approval. He said his multiple years of advocacy for the resolution took place while he was the speaker and/or the president of COGS. Choudhury noted that the resolution had yet to be presented to the general assembly at either COGS or CIGS, and that he and others would greatly appreciate the authors engaging in those consultations.

Petty added that resolutions of the University Senate and the Student Senate do not regularly go to Registered Student Government Associations (RSGAs) and he, as a student senator, is not required to engage with CIGS or COGS. Choudhury acknowledged that is true, and added that it is still best practice to engage with those constituents that a resolution will directly affect.

Steer asked if there were other questions. Committee members discussed a few revisions to the resolution in order to clarify how the administration might make the changes, and to whom the resolution applies (for example, does it apply to graduate students who receive fellowships?). Ned Patterson noted it is especially important to be clear about the exact population of students to whom this would apply. Patterson also asked if the authors considered how this would affect the University's competitiveness with respect to recruiting graduate students.

At a request from Johns, the committee endorsed the resolution (not unanimously) noting that additional consultation with student groups who would be affected by the resolution was recommended.

4. Partner Hiring Process

Ropers shared with the committee a document titled [Partner Hire Request Guidelines](#), which she drafted based partially on a discussion with and recommendations from SCFA at its December 7, 2021, meeting where the University's partner hiring process was first discussed.

5. Administrative Policy: *Emeritus/Emerita Title for Retired Faculty*

Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs, presented the Administrative Policy: [Emeritus/Emerita for Retired Faculty](#) for review. Gram noted that recommendations made by committee members at an earlier review of the policy had been incorporated. Updates to the policy included:

- Conferral of the title emeritus/emerita is automatic upon retirement. The president *must* consult with unit faculty in any situations where withholding or withdrawing the title is being considered by the president.
- Language regarding privileges that are provided to emeritus/emerita faculty have been revised in order to align with the privileges that are afforded current faculty members.
- Language regarding permission to audit courses continues to be evaluated and clarified.

After a short discussion, the committee endorsed the revisions to the policy with Gram noting that language regarding auditing courses would be finalized.

Hearing no further business, Steer thanked committee members and guests and adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office