

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Tuesday, March 10, 2009
2:30 – 4:15
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Kathryn Hanna (chair), Ben Bornsztein, Marilyn Bruin, Dann Chapman, Randy Croce, Jayne Fulkerson, Holly Littlefield, Theodor Litman, Joe Ritter, George Sheets, Roderick Squires, Elizabeth Stallman
- Absent: Arlene Carney, Carol Carrier, Tom Clayton, Vladimir Cherkassky, Luis Ramos-Garcia, Jessica Reinitz, James Wojtaszek
- Guests: Tanya Cothran, Mandy Stahre (Council of Graduate Students), George Green (Graduate School); Nan Wilhelmson (Office of Human Resources)

[In these minutes: (1) graduate students and the professoriate; (2) vacation leave policy: no payout when terminated for cause; (3) health-care savings plan]

1. Graduate Students and the Professoriate

Professor Hanna convened the meeting at 2:30 and welcomed Tanya Cothran and Mandy Starr from the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) and Associate Dean George Green of the Graduate School to discuss graduate-student interest in going into the professoriate. She noted that the Committee has discussed this issue before, including about a year ago with a group of graduate students. The overarching question is "do graduate students want to be professors?" If so, why, and if not, why not? She also referred Committee members to an article from The Chronicle of Higher Education on a study done at the University of California that reported that the longer a student is in graduate school, the less likely it is he or she wants to be a professor.

Ms. Cothran distributed copies of a 2008 biennial survey of graduate students conducted by COGS; 2000 graduate students from 133 degree programs completed the survey, with more than half in Ph.D. programs. One of the questions asked what position the students were seeking after graduation; overall, 21% said they would seek a tenure-track faculty position (down from 23% in 2006). The percentage varied by disciplinary areas: in the biological and health sciences and in engineering the numbers were low (11, 10, and 14%, respectively) while in education & psychology and the social sciences they were 23 and 26%, respectively, and 46% in the humanities. (The full report can be found at <http://www.cogs.umn.edu/surves.pdf>.)

The survey results also include data about the amount of time Ph.D. students communicate with their advisor (overall, 12% say once a semester or less, 39% say a few times per semester to twice per month, and 49% say once per week or more). Again, the percentages vary significantly between disciplinary areas. Those in the biological sciences and engineering communicate with advisors much

* 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

more frequently than do students in education & psychology, the health sciences, language, literature & the arts, or the social sciences.

Dean Green said that his findings are similar to the COGS findings, especially for Ph.D. students, and the COGS table of data on the amount of time Ph.D. students communicate with their advisors is the most relevant (because few M.A. or M.S. students become research-university faculty, except in a few specialized fields). He distributed copies of two tables of data summarizing the placement data for University Ph.D.s since 1957 (information is available on 7,605 of the 21,666 individuals who have received the degree). Of the 7,605, 5,281 went into non-academic positions (1,719 in the last 10 years, out of a total 2,517 known) and 2,387 went into the professoriate (798 in the last 10 years). The data for the last 10 years may be more indicative of current trends. So about 31% of the University's Ph.D.s went into faculty positions. Of those 2,387 Ph.D.s in the professoriate, about half are working at doctoral institutions. Of the 798 who received their Ph.D. in the last 10 years and who are in the professoriate, the percentage at doctoral institutions is lower, but as their careers progress they may move to positions at doctoral institutions. Those numbers are pretty good, especially when one considers that only 2% of American higher-education institutions are doctoral; if one-half of the University's Ph.D.s ends up in that 2%, the institution is doing a good job.

Do doctoral students want to be faculty members? There could be an aversion to Research I universities, Dean Green speculated. Students may see it as a rough life for faculty that does not provide enough time for family and leisure. These data suggest, however, that despite the concerns, a significant number of Ph.D. graduates are seeking and attaining faculty positions. These are highly-competitive positions, and some Ph.D.s may have wanted a faculty position but were unable to obtain one.

Having said that, one can ask if the University is doing as much as it can in preparing students to be young professors. The researchers at the University of California found one problem: family. When are women Ph.D.s to have babies? It is difficult to do as a graduate student or during the demanding years as a probationary faculty member, and after that the biological clock begins to expire. The University has made some moves in the right direction, such as the Graduate School allowing leaves for pregnant graduate assistants (programs are expected to make allowances for those women in the time allowed to complete their degrees), and graduate students have the same pregnancy leave as faculty members (once they have been here 9 months). Male graduate student fathers have the same leave as faculty fathers. The University's Ph.D.s are not likely to obtain a faculty position at the University, so the question becomes what happens at other universities.

The COGS findings that the percentage of Ph.D.s going into the professoriate varies by field shows up in their data as well, Dean Green said. In some fields (engineering, economics, health sciences) people take more jobs outside higher education—and that adds to the challenge of recruiting Ph.D.s to faculty positions in those fields. Those individuals have many more opportunities outside higher education than do those in other fields.

Professor Fulkerson said that in terms of competitiveness and the number of jobs in academe, there is a difference between the jobs someone really likes and the ones one applies for. Some might say they will not be competitive enough to obtain a faculty position, or they don't want to move, which is different from saying they would not LIKE to have the job. Ms. Cothran said that COGS was not aware of this issue when it conducted its survey; they only asked what positions the individuals were seeking. COGS plans on asking more questions about future career plans in their next survey in spring 2010.

Ms. Cothran noted that the California researchers found women moving away from positions at top universities because of obligations to children and because of negative experiences as graduate students. Advisors serve as role models, she said, and thought needs to be given to how they can encourage students to consider the professoriate, how to stop the tenure clock, and how to make them more desirable positions. Dean Green wondered if most graduate students know about the University's policies on stopping the clock (leaves). Ms. Stallman agreed and said the information needs to be made more widely-known. Doing so might make graduate student women consider a faculty position, Ms. Cothran said. Identifying ways to reduce stress could help, and the University could help by combating the "publish or perish" mentality.

Publish or perish is the reality, Dean Green responded, but the demand for publishing varies across institutions. Almost all expect some, but community colleges may expect work on teaching while liberal arts colleges range from the very distinguished (which may have publication expectations similar to the University) to those which are less distinguished and may not expect as much. Many graduate students may not understand that distinction. They can learn about these differences in the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) courses the Graduate School offers. Ms. Stahre reported that students in her program are required to take the courses but that the faculty in her department do not like to teach and must find people who will do it—and that sends the message that graduate students should be doing research and not focus on teaching.

PFF 8100 focuses on teaching and methods as well as resume-building; a second course allows students to shadow a faculty member at another college or university in the Twin Cities to learn what their life is like. Students then share notes on what they observed. The goal is to expose students to faculty life and teaching outside a Research I university, Professor Hanna commented. There are also subversive messages, Dean Green said, and they are that there are ways to teach other than by lecture and to overcome the perceived prejudice among faculty about students who do not get a faculty position at a Research I university. The Graduate School does not hold that view, he said, and recognizes that there can be gratifying careers in higher education at a wide variety of institutions. In his field, History, if they get 10% of their Ph.D.s in research universities and rest into other institutions, they have been successful. If a student restricts the area in which he or she will teach to Minnesota, for example, it can be very difficult to get a position. That varies by field, because there are no engineering programs in liberal arts colleges, nursing is usually found only in academic health centers, architecture has only a small number of schools, and so on.

Professor Squires asked whether many University graduate programs offer seminars on professional development topics. Dean Green said that there are only a small number of formal seminars but there is a wide variety of other ways to work on placement besides a seminar. Faculty are better at helping with academic placements than employment in the private sector (in the social sciences and humanities, for example), but engineers and some other fields have more connections with the private sector.

Ms. Stallman said that this discussion, and the data that have been presented, do not coincide with her experience. Most doctoral students she knows are not interested in entering the professoriate and job help is not happening in her field. So they base their opinions on experiences with faculty in their field—and conclude they don't want a faculty position because there is not enough time left for outside life. In the College of Education and Human Development, many graduate students come with a great deal of

outside experience and see that taking a faculty position would mean going back to the bottom of the ladder, something they are not willing to do. Dean Green said he believes that perception varies widely by field and local culture but said he did not know how to overcome it.

Ms. Stahre said a lot is dependent on advisors; some do not play a guiding role in helping students decide what to do after they leave their program. In some cases, the students cannot even reach their advisors. Professor Hanna said she has also heard about students who have difficulty reaching their advisors and that mentoring may not be what one should expect. Dean Green said mentoring is more likely to improve if a program takes on the issue, where the faculty take the leadership, rather than relying on each individual advisor to improve the situation. Some do well at it and others try to get rid of students, Ms. Stahre said.

Professor Ritter returned to the question of teaching versus research. If one thinks about the question from the standpoint of this as a research university and incentives, what reward do faculty get for good teaching? \$3000 per year for a teaching award. If one brings in a grant, one can get a lot more money and perhaps become a Regents Professor. This kind of structural differences in recognition works against incentives to teach, he said.

Professor Fulkerson agreed that there are problems in departments with faculty who do not want to advise and take on few students. Those who are good at advising are overwhelmed—and, as with teaching, when one looks at the incentives for advising, they are not strong. There are resources available on what one should accomplish as an advisor/mentor. Dean Green agreed and said there are Graduate School workshops offered in collaboration with other offices, such as resume preparation, but it is hard to get a handle on training faculty to be mentors. The Center for Teaching and Learning has a program, there are publications, and COGS did a publication for both students and advisors about mutual roles in the advisor/advisee relationship ("Staying on Course" at http://www.cogs.umn.edu/pdfs/Staying_On_Course_2008.pdf). This is better a department-level activity; they do not see a way to do central-level training programs (they have no money for them) and the circumstances vary a great deal by field (some employ graduate students and the faculty see them often while in other cases the students rarely see their advisors). They have done a pilot study on time-to-degree and mentoring is clearly one factor in students getting done. Only 50-60% of students complete their Ph.D.s (the percentage in the sciences is higher and the time to degree is shorter while the percentage is lowest in the humanities and the time to degree longest; the social sciences are in between). This is a national concern, and is not the same as job placement, but it is part of the process of improving graduate education. The more supported a student is, and the more focused a student is on education rather than where he or she wants to go when finished, the more likely he or she will complete the degree. The job piece may come late in the game.

Professor Fulkerson asked if the Committee has talked with Vice Provost Carney about information on mentoring students in the New Faculty Orientation. At least information about best practices could be provided. Most orientation about teaching focuses on undergraduate education, not mentoring Ph.D. students, Dean Green said. The new faculty have a lot on their minds—are overloaded—and many are not eligible to advise Ph.D. students until later in their career. There is time to deal with mentoring later, when they are not so overloaded. Ms. Stallman said she has always thought that graduate students should fill out a compatibility survey on advising needs and what faculty can give. Her department encourages students to choose faculty. There are proxies, Dean Green said, such as recruiting weekends before students decide to come to an institution; they can meet with advisors and

other graduate students. He also said departments do not use the concept of multiple advisors enough, an advising team to help on different elements of graduate student life. Ms. Cothran reported that COGS is looking at advisor quality and statements of expectations that students and faculty sign off on.

Professor Squires said that mentoring and advising depends on individual faculty and individual departments. They only admit students they can support, but there is no way to get around variability in advising, and the reward structure does not support it. Presumably the reason students come to a Research I university is to meet great minds, some of whom will be prickly. The central level is too high and the individual is too variable, Dean Green agreed, which is why he believes the program level is the right place to set advising expectations and standards. Some faculty will not buy into the responsibility, Professor Squires observed; then the willing few will do the most, Dean Green responded.

Professor Hanna reported that her college had sponsored a workshop a number of years ago on "science outside the ivory tower" that was very popular. With the economy in the shape it is, that is something units could do. That varies by department, Professor Squires commented, and there is a hierarchy; in some cases, students who do not want to go to a position in a Research I university are looked down upon, and no one would come to a session on non-academic jobs. Perhaps that is why it would be better to have such sessions at the collegiate or central level, Dean Green said.

Professor Hanna thanked the guests for joining the meeting.

2. Vacation Leave Policy: No Payout When Terminated for Cause

Professor Hanna turned to Ms. Wilhelmson to lead a discussion of a proposed change in the vacation leave policy.

Ms. Wilhelmson said that during the review of the policy, the question of payout of vacation balances to individuals (faculty or P&A staff) terminated for cause came up. Minnesota law provides that organizations can decide, by policy, not to pay out vacation balances to individuals terminated for cause. At present the University does pay out the balances.

Professor Ritter said he saw two serious problems with the proposal. One is a fairness issue, because the policy would treat people differently depending on whether they saved or spent their vacation time. The other problem is that termination for cause is often a judgment call; sometimes the cause is blatantly obvious and in other cases it is not. To add a penalty that could be thousands of dollars could result in more people contesting termination. He said that courts are reluctant to enforce penalties associated with stopping employment, and that while stopping employment itself is not a penalty, fining people would be. On the latter, Ms. Wilhelmson noted again that there is state law allowing the organization not to pay out the balances if it makes the decision as a matter of policy. In 2007 the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that an organization need not pay out the balances because it made it policy not to do so.

Ms. Wilhelmson noted, in response to a question, that there are about five or so of these cases per year. So a lot of termination for cause is not "termination for cause," Professor Ritter commented. Ms. Wilhelmson pointed out that non-renewal of a P&A appointment is not termination for cause, which requires investigation, fact-finding, etc. The issue came up as a matter of principle at a meeting of

Human Resources professionals, and they have also spoken with the Office of the General Counsel. It is not an uncommon practice to decline to pay out vacation balances in these situations.

What is the principle, Professor Squires asked? That one has already been terminated for legal reasons for inappropriate behavior, Ms. Wilhelmson said, and the individual should not be paid this benefit. (Individuals terminated are eligible for COBRA, Mr. Chapman said, and the University rarely denies it, but that is different because the individual pays the cost, not the University.)

Professor Fulkerson agreed with Professor Ritter that refusing the payout increases the potential for more contests of termination, or at least could cause more problems in the few cases that do arise. That potential did not come up in the conversations with the General Counsel's office, Ms. Wilhelmson reported. Professor Fulkerson pointed out that one or two people could cost the University a lot.

Professor Fulkerson also agreed with Professor Ritter that the different way people save and use vacation makes the policy change hard to justify. There is an alternative principle, Professor Ritter said, and that is that accumulated vacation is a form of compensation that an individual has already earned; some have spent it and some have not. Mr. Chapman said if someone's behavior is so egregious that he or she is terminated for cause, one can argue that the individual did not earn the benefit, so why should the University pay out one more penny? Why give them their last paycheck, Professor Ritter asked? One can argue that withholding the last paycheck is not legally an option, Mr. Chapman said, but declining to pay out vacation balances is.

Most people show up for work and expect their benefits, Professor Ritter said, and in one out of 20 termination cases they could be pushed over the edge and sue. Ms. Stallman agreed and said this could be the straw that breaks the camel's back in some cases. Two employees could be fired for the same reason, one of whom used up his or her vacation and the other one did not, and the latter individual loses the benefit.

How much is paid out, Professor Fulkerson asked? It is not a lot of money because there are so few faculty and P&A cases of termination for cause, Ms. Wilhelmson said.

Would this apply to Civil Service and bargaining-unit employees, Professor Hanna asked? They have not taken it beyond faculty and P&A staff, Ms. Wilhelmson said. There is no plan to do for Civil Service/bargaining-unit staff, Professor Hanna asked? There is not at this time but there may be in the future, Ms. Wilhelmson responded. If the rule is not applied to Civil Service staff, that is another fairness issue, Professor Litman pointed out. And this change will effectively not apply to P&A staff because the easiest path to getting rid of those employees is simply not to renew the appointment. So the penalty will apply differentially across employee categories. It would not apply to 9-month faculty because they do not accrue vacation. He repeated his view that this policy will not be fair in its effects. Ms. Wilhelmson said it will be applies to people who commit egregious acts of misconduct such as stealing (embezzling funds) from the University and the like. Mr. Chapman said he was aware of two cases since he came to the University in 2000, instances where employees covered ineligible dependents and incurred claims. These are not frequent occurrences and will not occur without substantial evidence.

Professor Ritter asked if there are definitions of the conditions for termination for cause. There is in the early-termination policy, Ms. Wilhelmson said, and it came from the General Counsel.

Professor Hanna asked the Committee if it wished to offer advice to the President's Policy Committee, the group that makes the final decision. It was agreed that the concerns expressed by the Committee should be forwarded.

Professor Hanna thanked Ms. Wilhelmson for bringing the policy change to the Committee.

3. Health Care Savings Plan

Professor Hanna reported that the health-care savings plan proposal that had been unanimously adopted by this Committee, the faculty of the Committee on Finance and Planning, and the Faculty Consultative committee earlier this year was voted down at the March 5 Faculty Senate meeting. Her view of the situation was that the vote was determined as a result of a statement by Professor Munson about the unequal treatment of same-sex domestic partners (who would be ineligible to use health-care savings plan money on a tax-free basis, unlike spouses of married couples). The Faculty Consultative Committee is talking about what might be done next. She also noted that by one very rough calculation, the result of the vote to not have the health-care savings plans could add about \$12 million in taxes paid annually by retired University faculty and P&A staff in upcoming years.

Professor Bruin commented that this issue has come up before but was not discussed. She said she has mixed feelings; she does not favor discrimination against gays and lesbians, but when one thinks about how much more everyone will be paying in taxes, it seems that there should be an alternative solution. There has been a lot of time and research put into the proposal and she applauded the decision of the Faculty Consultative Committee not to let it go to waste. Professor Hanna said she did not believe the issue is dead.

Professor Hanna adjourned the meeting at 4:10.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota