

**Commission on Faculty Affairs  
Minutes  
February 26, 2010**

Members attending: Debbie Smith (acting chair), Jack Finney (for Dean Chang), Brad Klein, Sam Riley, Tami Watson, Bruce Pencek, Thomas Olson (for Dean Winistorfer), Sam Easterling, Drew Marrs, Dennis Welch, and Patricia Hyer

Guests: Robin Panneton, SACS Coordinator, University Planning and Self Study; Maxwell Awando, Graduate Student, Higher Education Administration

Agenda for the meeting included three items: SACS update, federal contract compliance, and update on university committee to evaluate teaching.

The minutes of the CFA meeting on February 12, 2010, were approved without change prior to the meeting by email.

SACS Update

Robin Panneton updated CFA members about the ongoing SACS reaccreditation process. Virginia Tech administrators submitted the SACS compliance review document in September 2009. Overall, Virginia Tech did very well, receiving questions in only 10 out of 86 compliance categories. For example, the SACS accreditation team requested further documentation of the handling of student complaints. They also requested additional documentation of credentials for only seven out of approximately 2000 faculty members. The response to the "focused report" was submitted in February. The SACS accreditation team will be on campus from March 16 to 18 for the on-site review. The team will meet with a wide variety of university community members, including board members, administrators, faculty members, and students. The Quality Enhancement Plan related to first year experiences will be a special focus of the on-site visit. At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the SACS accreditation team will inform the president whether Virginia Tech is likely to receive reaccreditation or if there are substantive concerns. Virginia Tech will have a chance to provide further information and respond to any remaining concerns. Reaccreditation will be voted on at the SACS meeting in December 2010.

Federal Contract Compliance

Debbie Smith briefed CFA members about the federal compliance task force discussion at the Faculty Senate February 16th. Several CFA members were present at the Senate meeting and reported that there were many questions, but the discussion was not contentious. Most faculty members seemed to understand the importance of and remedies proposed. The Senate voted to support the development of draft language by CFA to address these issues.

CFA reviewed the proposed language changes submitted by the task force. There are two issues that need to be addressed: effort certification and annual leave for research extended appointments.

Proposed new language for Chapter 6 of the Faculty Handbook covers effort certification and addresses the broad issues relevant to federal contract compliance related to salary charges to grants and contracts. Charges to a grant must match the time period during which the faculty member worked. Thus, if faculty members work on grants during the

academic year, they may charge salary to the grant and create salary savings that can be used to cover institutional effort during the summer. Distributing institutional funding across the 12-month period allows them to appropriately charge departmental funds to cover university (non-grant related) responsibilities during the summer. Proposed language for chapter 2 of the Faculty Handbook addresses the issue of summer pay for AY faculty specifically.

Policy 6200 addresses research extended appointments. Proposed revisions to this policy included reinstatement of annual leave for 12-month research extended appointments. This change will address the issue of vacation time for faculty members who are fully funded by a sponsored grant or contract during the summer. With accrued leave, faculty members on research extended appointments would be able to take vacation during the summer and still be in compliance with federal regulations since annual leave would be part of the approved university appointment. CFA members urged that proportional annual leave be included for 10 and 11 month appointments also.

CFA members are concerned about how to handle vacation time for faculty members who are full-time wage employees for the entire three months of summer and are not able to convert because of the timing of grant award. Faculty members who are on full-time wages may not take vacation, since their base academic year appointments do not earn or accrue annual leave.

CFA members liked the idea of broadly circulating the policy changes to faculty and department heads to gather comments. Hyer suggested circulating the document to the Commission on Research, Faculty Senate members, deans, department heads, research extended faculty, and research institutes.

#### Update on University Committee to Evaluate Teaching

Sam Riley updated CFA members on the ongoing work of the committee to revise student evaluations of teaching. The committee is considering recommending that all instructors shift to an electronic evaluation process. They are also considering a composite measure made up of mean scores for a select group of questions to replace the single "overall" rating item. The committee expects that there may be a core set of questions for all faculty members to use, and a bank of questions to draw upon to accommodate the wide variety of pedagogical and course experiences used across the disciplines.

#### New Business to be Addressed at Future Meetings

- 1) Several CFA commission representative appointments are expiring and need to be filled. Debbie Smith will send the list of appointments out to CFA members and ask for volunteers.
- 2) Presentation on the study of tenure success by faculty cohort by Tracey Cameron, GA in the Provost's Office.

Recorder, Cindy Wilkinson