

**Commission on Faculty Affairs
Minutes
October 29, 2010**

Members attending: Debbie Smith (chair), Jack Finney, Kay Hunnings (Rep. Rich Sorensen), John Massey, Brad Klein, Sam Riley, Monica Ponder, Leslie O'Brien (Rep. Bruce Pencek), Ranjana Mehta, Peter Doolittle and Ray Van Dyke

Agenda: Agenda for the meeting included three items: Faculty evaluations Committee update (Peter Doolittle and Ray Van Dyke), Research Leave clarification (Jack Finney) and Employee Benefits Committee update (Debbie Smith).

The minutes of the CFA meeting on September 17, 2010, were approved without change by email prior to the meeting

Update on University Committee to Evaluate Teaching

Peter Doolittle and Ray Van Dyke briefed CFA members on the progress made by the University Committee to Evaluate Teaching and its subcommittees. The committee had made significant progress and had developed instruments to evaluate teaching at Virginia Tech. The evaluations instruments are administered electronically with the help of Virginia Tech Learning Technologies. The report was divided into three sections as per the subcommittees' charge:

- i. *Student perception of instruction (SPOI)*
The committee piloted a revised SPOI instrument in forty courses in the spring of 2010. The SPOI form has been revised again incorporating suggestions from students and the committee timeline is to pilot the instrument in the College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE) in Fall 2010. The new instrument will be available for formal implementation university wide in Spring 2011. It was reported that demographic information had been removed from the electronic form since that information can be obtained from Banner and merged with the teaching data; students must log in using a VT identifier, which makes their demographic data obtainable.
- ii. *Peer observation of teaching*
The committee had developed a peer observation of teaching instrument. The goal was to improve teaching by being observed. The results of observation can be either formative or summative. Peer observers will therefore need to be trained on the process and pedagogical practices. It was noted that peer observation is currently conducted in departments but there is no set standard. The time line was to pilot the instrument in Spring 2011 within two colleges and make the instrument available university wide in the Fall of 2011.
- iii. *Self-assessment of teaching*
The committee was charged with developing an instrument for Self-Assessment of teaching. The purpose for self- assessment is developmental and continuous improvement and the results of the evaluation could be both formative and summative. The committee is in the process of coming up with guidelines for training on how self- assessment will be conducted. The timeline is to pilot the form in two colleges in Spring 2011 and make it available university wide Fall 2011.

Peter Doolittle and Ray Van Dyke further reported that they are looking at using eportfolios structure to foster integration, interpretation and transformation of evaluation of teaching and instructional development. The reports that will possible from the new data are flexible and there may be many different presentations of data desired by departments and colleges. The committee continues to work on reports.

CFA raised issues of anonymity of students who will be filling the evaluation forms since they have to log in using their PID. It was noted that the electronic version has personal identifiers and any comment made by a student and is considered or perceived as a threat, could be traced to the person and appropriate action taken in consultation with Threat Assessment Team. However the evaluation report presented to faculty will be anonymous.

Research Leave clarification

Jack Finney provided handouts and briefed CFA members on the new language that has been drafted to clarify eligibility and compensation issues related to research leave in the Faculty Handbook (sections 3.8, 3.9, 4.9, and 4.10 on Study Research Leave and Research Assignment). The purpose of these changes is to clarify policies and make the policies consistent with our practice. The updated sections will be an agenda item that will be voted on during the next CFA meeting.

The CFA members recognized the need to have a tenured faculty member participate in the Faculty Handbook Work Group that Jack Finney and Ellen Plummer will convene. The work group will focus on current policy errors and gaps in the Faculty Handbook. Finney will solicit nominations from the Faculty Senate.

Employee Benefits Committee update

Debbie Smith reported that the 3% salary bonus for staff by the State will be taxed at the normal tax rate and not 36% across the board as earlier reported. Each employee will be taxed at their personal tax level.

New Business

Commission on University Support

Leslie O'Brien reported that a proposal had been made to disband the Commission on University Support. This proposal came about due to the limited activities of the commission. The commission had become more of an informational rather than a policy/governance committee. The commission has four committees reporting to it: Transportation and Parking Committee, Energy and Sustainability Committee, Building Committee, and Computing and Communications Resources Committee. The proposal to disband the commission was voted down during the October meeting. The role of the commission will be evaluate and perhaps enhanced in the coming year.

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