

**Commission on Faculty Affairs**  
**Minutes**  
**February 20, 2015**

**Members Attending:** Rami Dalloul (Chair), Velva Groover, Jack Finney, Chad Lavin, Drew Muscente, Wornie Reed, and Anne Zajac.

**Guests:** Hans Robinson (CGSP chair) and Greg Purdy (GSA president)

1. Announcement to approve and post the minutes from the February 6, 2015 meeting. Those minutes have been posted on the CFA Scholar site.

Minutes will be reviewed during the next CFA meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

2. CGSP draft resolution on conflict of interest (available on Scholar): discussion with Hans Robinson (CGSP chair) and Greg Purdy (GSA president) on the "Resolution on Faculty Family or Close Relations Serving on Graduate Advisory Committees."

Robinson and Purdy began by explaining that there have been cases in which faculty members are spouses/partners and together serve on graduate advisory committees. There have been a small number of cases where an apparent conflict of interest has influenced the committee's votes on the student's work. Currently, there is no university policy addressing this issue and graduate students have little protection if there is any impropriety. Dean DePauw is looking for ways to address this conflict of interest. Other institutions have not dealt with this conflict of interest and they would want VT to be a leader in addressing such issues. Therefore, CGSP has drafted a resolution that does not allow for faculty members who are spouses/partners to together serve on a graduate advisory committee, unless formally requested by the student. This resolution seeks to ensure that faculty members are independent from one another.

CFA members asked about the pervasiveness of this problem. Purdy explained that they are trying to document these issues every time the dean hears about it. CFA members suggested that some hard data be collected before creating a policy. CFA members also expressed concern that making this a university-wide policy may create difficulties in small departments or programs. Some programs may not have the flexibility to form an advisory committee if spouses cannot serve on the same committee. Robinson and Purdy explained that the resolution allows for exceptions. CFA members also suggested that CGSP look into addressing this issue through the graduate student appeal process.

Robinson and Purdy explained that they will continue to gather more data on this issue. Finney suggested that the data gathered address questions like "how many departments have these problems (with faculty members being couples)." Research and preparation may also need to include how the programs university-wide will be able to accommodate this potentially new policy.

3. Reports from CFA representatives on other commissions and committee.

No updates were provided

4. Announcements

No announcements were provided.

5. Other business

Voluntary Transitional Retirement Program

Finney explained some of the options being developed for the new Voluntary Transitional Retirement Program (VTRP) for Tenure Faculty and asked for CFA's feedback. The first option is the two-year transition plan. In this plan, the first year there is a reduction of employment to .80 and a corresponding reduction of salary, standard teaching load, and service activities are reduced by 50%. During the second year, there is reduction of employment to .50 and a corresponding reduction of salary, .50 teaching load, and no service required. Benefits will include health insurance, retirement credits in ORP and VRS systems, life insurance, sick leave, and LTD benefits.

Finney then explained that there was another option: the three-year transition plan. During year one, employment would be reduced to .80 including corresponding reduction in salary, standard teaching load, and service would be reduced by 50%. In years two and three, employment would be reduced to .50 including corresponding reduction in salary, .50 teaching load, and no service would be required. Benefits will include health insurance, retirement credits in ORP and VRS systems, life insurance, sick leave, and LTD benefits.

Reed noted that reducing service in these retirement options was a great approach. Finney also explained that for the three-year transition plan, he plans to create an additional option that is a 50-50-50 plan with different service requirements. However, based on CFA's feedback, Finney will make sure to leave the other two options in place as well.

Doctoral Student Diploma Resolution

Robinson and Purdy briefly discussed that they soon would be putting a resolution through to have doctoral student diplomas not to include the name of the program. This change would reduce confusion when the formal program name is different from the specialty that the student has been working on. Finney suggested that changing the names of the programs to be consistent with the intent of the curriculum may be a better approach than suppressing information from diplomas.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Recorder, Elsa Camargo