

Faculty Handbook Committee
Minutes of Meeting on October 19, 2016
Approved with Amendments, November 2 2016

Minutes of the meeting of Faculty Handbook Committee, October 19, 2016, 12:30-1:45 p.m., in the Slovak Room, Grasselli Library

Present: Ruth Connell (chair), Jeff Johansen (secretary), Roy Day, Karen Gygli, Dianna Taylor, Brenda Wirkus standing in for Paul Lauritzen (on leave). Guest: Pam Mason

We engaged in a conversation with Pam Mason regarding clinical/contingent faculty. We discussed the possibility of using Faculty Collaborator as a rank. Pam preferred clinical or contingent faculty to faculty collaborator. AAUP objects to non-tenured faculty, however, they suggest protections to non-tenured faculty: health benefits, regularized hiring, evaluation procedures, promotion.

In order to move forward with any proposal, the committee identified several issues that were concerns and that would need to be dealt with. These concerns follow.

- 1) Criteria for reappointment need to be spelled out in the proposal. Without the normal tenure track, what would be the nature of the contracts given to contingent faculty? Would they be on yearly contracts, 3-year contracts, 5 year contracts, or something else? Would they be at-will employees? Would they have access to faculty grievance processes in the case of unfavorable evaluation or termination?
- 2) How would these faculty be hired? Would they be employees of opportunity (they approach us, they meet a need, they know someone with the authority of department chair or above)? Or would they be hired as a result of a national or regional advertised search?
- 3) How would these faculty be evaluated? Would the evaluation process be similar to that given to staff, or would it be more in line with the evaluation of faculty? Would there be opportunities for promotion, and if so, would this be unranked promotion, or would ranks be constructed for these faculty?
- 4) Would the duties of these faculty be similar among departments? Pam Mason felt they would be different depending on the needs of the department in which they were hired. Dianna expressed reservations about responsibilities being variable, as this would greatly complicate evaluation and salary. It is thought that these clinical faculty would teach and perform other services, such as administration of programs, advising, outreach to the community, etc. Examples of present staff that might be reclassified as clinical faculty include laboratory coordinators in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, the station manager for WJCU, the theater director in Communications, the Health Professions Advisor. We recommended that proponents of clinical faculty should discuss the possibility of clinical faculty varying widely in responsibilities across the university with legal counsel for the university.

5) We spent some time discussing the question, “What are faculty?” We consider the fundamental answer to be tenurable members of the university community. Tenure is granted to teachers and scholars, as well as to librarians. These faculty have different roles in the university, but share common evaluation and promotion procedures, are hired as part of approved regional or national searches, have voting rights in the Faculty Council and in other matters. We felt in practice, it is not so much what faculty do that defines them as it is that they are tenurable and have faculty voting rights. They are defined and governed by the Faculty Handbook.

6) The rights due contingent faculty must be elaborated. Potential rights include health benefits, retirement benefits, disability benefits, and voting rights. If voting rights are granted, there should be faculty responsibilities such as attendance at general faculty meetings and meetings of the faculty council. Attendance in departmental meetings should occur if contingent faculty are voting on departmental matters.

After the departure of Pam Mason, we continued our discussion among members and processed our discussion with the following conclusions.

A sticking point for clinical faculty is granting them voting rights. The Faculty Handbook allows for faculty collaborators that do not have voting rights but can be defined in variable ways with variable responsibilities, can be given staff benefits, can be hired using variable practices, and are at-will employees, as they would be anyway with untenured status. If they are given voting rights, it would be assumed that they have the responsibilities of faculty that go with those rights: attendance at general faculty meetings, faculty council meetings, departmental meetings, and participation in the life of the university through serving on university committees. Faculty Handbook Committee believes it is not a good idea to grant voting rights without including faculty university responsibilities

We as a body were not sure that contingent faculty wanted faculty voting rights if the responsibilities of those rights went with them. There was some indication that current faculty collaborators are slightly rankled at their exclusion from this aspect of university life, but we are not at all sure that contingent faculty that come to us from non-academic backgrounds to teach based on significant life experience would want these rights. If the category of faculty collaborators, a category in the faculty handbook, was adjusted to include contingent faculty as broadly conceived by diverse members of the university, this could probably be done without amending the handbook if voting rights remained excluded.

We recommended to Dr. Mason that those wanting to put forward a proposal on contingent faculty should meet with the various departments to address their concerns and to see where the departments see them utilizing contingent faculty in their programs. The proposal needs modification to address diverse concerns to ensure adoption when it comes for a vote. The Faculty Handbook Committee is interested in this issue and wants to find common ground with those seeking to utilize contingent faculty to strengthen the university’s educational mission.

We approved the minutes of the meeting held October 5, 2016.

Adjourned at 1:56 p.m.