

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee meeting on Thursday, November 13th, 2008. (Submitted by Roann Barris.)

Hello everyone. Here are brief minutes from yesterday's meeting. Tricia, Iain and Kay were not present but six of us were there so we spent some time reviewing the "official" objectives for the committee and discussing some of the issues which were relevant and unresolved from last year. Our first area of discussion concerned the question raised last year by the IGC on student evaluations of faculty and whether we were duplicating their efforts. I summarized the outcome of that question and how our concerns differ from theirs (and will continue to differ). The next issue we discussed did relate to an action of the IGSEF, the new student evaluation forms. Although not officially our area of interest, it is nonetheless of interest to everyone and does have implications for questions about administration and use. The particular problem which has been noted by almost everyone is that the goal of keeping student comments on the same form as the numeric ratings has resulted in a form which has markedly decreased the amount of space available for students' comments. We are assuming at this point that this initial form is a trial run and will undergo modification in the near future.

We spent the remainder of the meeting discussing issues related to objective 2. [I still haven't received the Faculty Workload study results which we need for Objective 1 – I will recontact Wil about that.] We shared what knowledge we have of different approaches to the use of any criteria for faculty evaluation. Given the range of departments represented on our committee and also given Maung's experiences as prior chair, the variability in what departments and chairs do is quite large and fascinatingly informative. Several questions which came up as perhaps appropriate to a survey included. In rough form these included the following: is there a mentor system in the department for untenured faculty? How are percentages (related to time spent in committees, numbers of papers, etc.) used? Does the chair or personnel committee have written materials explaining evaluation and tenure/promotion activities which are given to faculty? For the non-statistical material which may be used: exactly what is it and how is it collected?

We emphasized the fact that if we put together a survey, we will share the results. We do not want our survey to fall into the category of the many surveys done which collect data, analyze it, and never share it. And we do not want to make pie charts. We also do not clearly want to survey all faculty. For the purposes of this survey, it would probably be most beneficial and direct to go to chairs and personnel committees.

The outcome of such a survey, as directed by objective 2, may be motions/proposals for changing relevant sections of the TRFH. We also discussed the fact that we do not envision writing something which will mandate a single procedure for using material or determining what items are relevant but will probably try to write something which includes a range of options and recognizes differences between disciplines.

In the interest of time and efficiency, I gave a homework assignment to everyone: Read the relevant sections of the TFRH (1.4.1., 1.6, 1.7) and look for areas that need improvement, clarification, or amplification. Begin thinking of questions which would be useful to include in a survey (that might include trying to make sense of the questions I jotted down above!) We left at approximately 4:30.

Next meeting: Dec. 4, 210 Hurburt, 3:30 pm.