

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
October 1, 2009

Members present: R. Barris (chair), P. Brush, I. Clelland, T. Easterling, K. Gainer, J. McDonel

Members absent: S. Ament, M. Gibson (attending School of Nursing retreat), M. Htay, P. Stanley

Guests: None

1. The Faculty Issues Committee was called to order at 3:35 p.m.
2. K. Gainer was chosen as recorder.
3. The committee set the following goals for the 2009-2010 academic year:
 - a. To study and make recommendations as to how faculty evaluation numbers should be applied when money for raises does become available
 - b. To study and make recommendations as to how faculty evaluations should be conducted
 - c. To study and make recommendations as to (i.) how substitutes may be provided in cases of medical/extended leave and (ii.) how provision is to be made for faculty requiring maternity/childcare leave.
4. The committee may also, time permitting, address the following:
 - a. Faculty workload
 - b. Procedures for Faculty Appeals and Faculty Grievances committees
 - c. Conduct of exit interviews
 - d. Effect on faculty of the absence of a budget.
5. The committee set as an agenda for its next meeting the development of plans for collecting data necessary to address goals under item 3. R. Barris will bring the results of the FI survey begun last fall related to departmental differences in the conduct of faculty evaluations and guidelines for tenure and promotion. P. Brush is planning to give thought to the way we might collect data related to item 4d.
6. The committee adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder

Addendum: K. Gainer agreed to serve as the FI representative on the Internal Governance task force.

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
October 15, 2009

Members present: R. Barris (chair), S. Brush, I. Clelland, T. Easterling, K. Gainer, M. Gibson, M. Htay, and P. Stanley

Members absent: J. McDonnel,

Guests: none

1. The committee was called to order at 3:59 p.m.
2. The minutes of the October 1, 2009, meeting were approved as amended.
3. R. Barris presented reports collected last year from departments in response to a survey regarding the procedures and criteria by which faculty are evaluated. Reports addressed such issues as (1) the nature of the guidelines followed by the various departments, (2) the criteria and materials used by chairs to evaluate faculty, and (3) the procedures and criteria followed by the various departments in reaching tenure and promotion decisions.
4. R. Barris will provide committee members with the computer files containing the reports mentioned in item 3.
5. It was proposed that the committee report the results of survey and make recommendations for changes to the Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook. Such proposals would have as their goal the establishment of uniform guidelines that would eliminate nebulous and arbitrary criteria.
6. The committee discussed whether or not an evaluation template or rubric should be developed. It was not felt that the FAR was an appropriate template. It is also currently not clear how the FAR is to be used, nor how department chairs arrive at numbers based upon the FAR.
7. The committee discussed the need for criteria to be specified and the need to provide adequate information to the faculty, no matter what the criteria may be. Mentoring was proposed as one avenue for helping faculty to understand expectations. Faculty orientations may be another avenue for helping faculty to understand expectations. In the absence of the New Faculty Institute, departments have an especial responsibility to convey specifics.
8. The committee also discussed the current approach to weighting the numbers derived from the FARs: the percentages allotted to Teaching, Professional Activities, and University Service, respectively.
9. It was noted by P. Brush that the Council of Chairs may be taking up some of the above issues.
10. The committee adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
October 29, 2009

Members present: R. Barris (chair), S. Brush, I. Clelland, T. Easterling, K. Gainer, and J. McDonnel

Members absent: M. Gibson, M. Htay, and P. Stanley

Guests: none

1. The committee was called to order at 3:38 p.m.
2. The committee discussed the extent to which it is possible to evaluate faculty by common criteria when courses vary in size and population, comparing, for example, courses in the CORE with courses designed for majors. A weighted scale was raised as a possible solution.
3. Committee members agreed that, while it is impossible to eliminate all subjectivity, it is critical to have some guidelines.
4. Members agreed that the committee cannot dictate how things should be weighted but that the committee could present a series of questions to which personnel committees could provide public answers, with rationales.
5. The committee has examples of guidelines from all colleges, although not from all departments, and the guidelines were divided among committee members, each of whom will report back to the committee at the next meeting. The chair's preliminary examination of the guidelines suggests that there is currently no uniformity.
6. Members discussed the possibility that an examination of the guidelines may uncover things that need to be changed in the handbook.
7. The committee discussed the possibility of providing departments with model rubrics, possibly from other universities, and committee members will look for such rubrics online.
8. Members agreed that the committee must be careful to be respectful of prerogatives of department personnel committees.
9. The committee adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
November 12, 2009

Members present: R. Barris (chair), P. Brush, I. Clelland, T. Easterling, K. Gainer, M. Gibson, and J. McDonnel

Members absent: M. Htay (flu)

Guests: none

1. The committee was called to order at 3:35 p.m.
2. The committee continued its discussion of why the current process of evaluating faculty may need to be reexamined: to make certain that faculty know how numeric ratings are arrived at and to make it possible to address appeals fairly. Each college and department should have well-defined criteria that preclude arbitrariness.
3. Well-defined criteria would also mean that faculty will have clear expectations of what their departments value. Such criteria will facilitate faculty attempts to document their accomplishments and contributions; such criteria will also facilitate mentoring or will allow 'virtual' mentoring as faculty evaluate themselves according to known criteria.
4. The rise in the number of untenured but tenure-track faculty makes it especially urgent that a reassessment of the evaluation process take place. Moreover, the committee discussed the advisability of reassessing evaluation procedures at regularly scheduled intervals. Every set number of years criteria for faculty evaluation should be reviewed.
5. The committee discussed the question of consistency across departments and colleges and the difficulty of establishing such consistency.
6. The committee discussed the issue of peer evaluation, which is not required by the faculty handbook. If a department opts for peer evaluations, such evaluations must be performed for all members of the department.
7. The committee again agreed that the first step in the process of any possible reform in the evaluation system is to describe current department guidelines. Members looked at a several specific sets of guidelines and noted that some are quite detailed while others are rudimentary. Additional guidelines were distributed to committee members, to be studied before the next meeting, when the committee will tabulate features of the guidelines.
8. The committee discussed the fact that any reexamination of the evaluation process must address the question of how the guidelines function with respect to merit pay and raises.
9. A new request has been brought to the committee – to develop handbook guidelines for future online administration of student evaluations. We will address this topic at the start of the new semester.
10. The committee adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder

Faculty Issues, Feb. 4, 3:30 – 4:45, 210 Hurlburt

Attended by: Suzanne Ament, Roann Barris, Paula Brush, Iain Clelland, and Kim Gainer. Maung Htay and Mary Gibson had previous commitments; Jim McDonel is now teaching at that time; and Tricia Easterling had an emergency situation.

1) Briefly considered the issue of how faculty can determine what equipment is in a classroom before making a classroom request. Although it is possible to get this information for most of the classrooms on campus, it is not possible to get it for Young (without calling Krista Terry). The issue is important but may be more appropriate for the Campus Environment committee. Can it be referred to them?

2) We considered the issue of confidentiality with student evals of faculty, now that the results are sent by email to each department's personnel committee chair. It was noted that confidentiality was a potential issue with the paper reports, but the pdfs in email are more accessible to a variety of people and could fall into the wrong hands, whether by design or mistake. The issue may potentially be resolved by other means than changing the faculty handbook – is it possible to encode passwords in the evaluation reports? We will contact Bethany Bodo about this.

3) We have also contacted Matt Oyo and invited both Matt and Bethany to our next meeting on Feb. 18 to discuss the proposed revisions to the student evaluations of faculty. Several questions were raised by the committee although we were generally impressed with the new forms.

4) We discussed the compressed final exam schedule which eliminates Friday exams and considered the possibility of a one-shot campus wide survey of feelings about the elimination of Friday final exams. Further discussion to ensue.

5) We were asked to approve the New Graduate Faculty criteria: some questions were raised and Roann was charged with contacting Dennis Grady for more information. (This was done.)

Submitted by:

Roann Barris, Ph.D, chair, Faculty Issues committee.

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
February 18, 2010

Members present: S. Ament, R. Barris (chair), T. Easterling, K. Gainer, M. Gibson, M. Htay

Members unable to attend: P. Brush, I. Clelland, and J. McDonel

Guests: B. Bodo and Matt Oyos

1. The committee was called to order at 3:38 p.m.
2. The committee discussed methods for safeguarding results from student evaluations. B. Bodo said that if the policy in handbook (currently: distribution to personnel chairs) were changed, then, resources permitting it might be possible to create links, but that the process would be cumbersome.
3. Committee members posed the following questions to M. Oyos and B. Bodo:
 - (1) Why was the overall question about the instructor eliminated? Response: The last question tended to override all other questions so that the evaluation in effect did not measure all dimensions. The question's removal was in part a response to faculty concerns that the question trumped all other questions. Moreover, averages of responses to other questions have closely tracked averages of responses to the final question, making that question redundant.
 - (2) What will be the effect be of changing the instrument on untenured faculty who have up to this point been evaluated using the old instrument? Response: It is incumbent upon departments to examine their standards and adjust to the new system. However, there is no systematic way to account for changes in ratings when an instrument changes.
 - (3) Is it possible to pilot the new instrument? Response: It is possible, but there are a lot of issues involved. If the faculty wishes to pilot the new instrument, that could be attempted.
 - (4) Should the phrase 'course materials' be clarified, perhaps with examples? Response: Fine distinctions may not be noted by student in the course of filling out evaluations.
 - (5) What is the effect of NAs on averages? Response: NAs not averaged in. However, it is important that students understand what NA stands for.
 - (6) When would use of the new instrument be implemented? Response: Earliest implementation would be Fall of 2010.this : To make motion for Senate to approve/not approve. Implementation: Matt—earliest Fall of 2010. Will continue discussion March 4.
4. After the above question and answer session, the committee decided to continue discussion on March 4 as to whether it should move that the Faculty Senate approve/not approve the revised instrument.
5. Regarding the GAC's Proposed Graduate Faculty Criteria, the committee approved the following motion:

The Faculty Issues committee recommends Senate support for the GAC's Proposed Graduate Faculty criteria, following inclusion of the category of

“temporary full-time faculty” in area II (Associate Graduate Faculty Membership) of the proposed new document.

6. Regarding the compressed final exam schedule, the committee agreed upon surveying both faculty and students as to their experience with this time frame.
7. The committee adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder

Minutes of the Faculty Issues Committee
March 25, 2010

Members present: R. Barris (chair), C. Seyfrit (for P. Brush), T. Easterling, Ian Clelland, K. Gainer, M. Gibson,

Members unable to attend: S. Ament and M. Htay

Guests: none

1. The committee was called to order at 3:45 p.m.
2. The committee continued its discussion of the proposed Faculty and Course Evaluation form. Issues discussed:
 - The elimination of the question on previous forms regarding students' overall assessments of the instructor, i.e., this question has in effect been superseded by a report that includes a number averaging responses to all questions about the instructor.
 - Adjustments that may be necessary in the wording of specific questions.
 - Difficulties that may arise because new numbers may be incommensurate with old ones, e.g., the category "Neutral" on the new form may not be the equivalent of "Good" on the old form.
3. The committee wishes to recommend to the Student Evaluation IG committee that the new form be piloted in order to address questions such as the following: Are the old and new forms comparable? How can the new forms be calibrated so that results can be read in a fashion that is meaningful in light of previous student evaluations of faculty?
4. Committee members agreed to seek feedback on the form from their constituencies.
5. The committee discussed the fact that the handbook specifies that the procedures for evaluating faculty are to be reevaluated every three years. The committee is concerned that departments periodically be reminded of this requirement.
6. The committee reviewed the list of questions that fall under its purview: How should FARs be used when faculty once more receive pay raises? Should the compressed exam week be revisited? Should the university reexamine its approach to maternity leave?
 - With regard to the compressed exam schedule, I. Clelland will continue discussions with Ed Oakes on how best to survey faculty and students as to their preferences.
 - With regard to maternity leave, R. Barriss will invite Agida Manizade to meet with the committee.
7. The committee adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

K. Gainer, recorder