

Minutes of Faculty Council
October 7, 2008, 12:15p.m., West Conference Room EJ West Library

Members present: Jeffrey DeLotto; Elizabeth Alexander; Linda Carroll; Maxine Harrington; Brenda Taylor Matthews; Sue Passmore; Katherine Prater; Pamela Rast; Joan Stringfellow; Thomas Tolleson; Sameer Vaidya; Robert J. Wilson.

Members absent: Susan Ayres

Also present: Dr. Allen Henderson, Provost of the University

Old Business: Members questioned the memo received from the Human Resources Department concerning the Rebecca Estes Gray Retirement Fund, which has been annuitized through Hartford Insurance Company. Members present who participate in this former university retirement program are concerned that they have not received adequate information about the annuity policy. Dr. Henderson agreed to ask Human Resources to request that Hartford provide each participant with a copy of the annuity statement. Dr. DeLotto noted that Bobby Deaton, Chair of the Retirement Committee and Mac McLain will give a presentation to the faculty at the next Assembly meeting and that he would ask that they include information on the former REG fund.

New Business:

1. Faculty Merit Pay proposal
 - a. Dr. Henderson reported to the Council that a meeting of the Deans, Provost, and President had concurred that all future raises for faculty would be merit raises. No COLA or across-the-board raises are planned.
 - b. Under the current assessment procedure, the deans have some discretion to increase (or decrease) the weight given teaching in the merit plan. Dr. Henderson noted that, especially for graduate faculty, expectations for scholarship are increasing. He also noted that to receive any merit pay, a faculty member must receive a “satisfactory” rating in teaching.
 - c. Dr. Henderson reported that several adjustments have been made to faculty salaries to keep salaries competitive.
 - i. Three years ago, money was set aside to adjust the salaries of senior professors.
 - ii. Last year, money was set aside to adjust the salaries of junior faculty and to raise the salaries offered to new hires.
 - iii. This year, the Board of Trustees plans to look at the performance of professors having been here for at least 8-10 years of service, and may make some adjustment.
 - iv. Dr. Henderson emphasized that the Board of Trustees is committed to paying faculty competitive salaries. However, the money available for salaries is dependent on the performance of the endowment.
 - d. Several Council members had questions;
 - i. The lack of faculty support for a merit-only plan was expressed.

- ii. The failure of new faculty to qualify for merit raises was mentioned.
 - iii. A suggestion that the faculty be surveyed to discover what support, if any, exists for the merit-only plan was presented.
 - iv. Several members were concerned about limits on the number of faculty members in each department or school who might qualify for merit raises. Dr. Henderson replied that the merit plan was criteria-based and not competitive, and that technically, all faculty could qualify. He emphasized, however, that the proposal was intended to reward merit only for clearly superior performance.
 - v. Another question was asked about fairness of merit criteria across disciplines and schools. Dr. Henderson replied that he and the deans had found it too difficult to create common criteria for merit across disciplines and schools. He urged the School of Arts and Sciences to complete its revisions for merit criteria, noting that the Schools of Business and Education had completed their revisions.
2. Dr. DeLotto announced the agenda for the next meeting of the Faculty Assembly:
 - a. Approval of the minutes of the Faculty Council of Oct. 8, 2008, and the last Faculty Assembly meeting.
 - b. Helena Bussell will give an update on the expected SACS visit.
 - c. Bobby Deaton will report from the Retirement Committee.
 - i. He wishes to encourage faculty who are not contributing to the university 401k plan to investigate the plan's offerings.
 - ii. He hopes to announce an information session for new and recently hired faculty on the university retirement options.
3. Council members raised concerns about the university health benefits plan.
 - a. The university cannot allow insurers other than the contract insurer to present options for supplemental insurance to faculty.
 - b. Brenda Matthews reported that Steve Roberts has agreed that the FLEX plan limit will be raised to \$3000. She will raise the question of additional supplemental programs at the next meeting of the Benefits committee and report back to Faculty Council.
4. Dr. DeLotto reminded Council members that decisions of the Academic Affairs Committee are reported to the Faculty Council. He will present the actions of Academic Affairs after votes on the various measures occur.
5. One Faculty Council member agreed to organize a faculty survey of opinions about how salary increases should be determined.
6. Dr. DeLotto reported on progress on the Dean's Search in the School of Arts and Sciences. The School will hold a meeting soon to discuss criteria for the dean's position, and the School will select members to represent the School on the selection committee.

7. Questions were asked about faculty input into the design of the new fitness center and its placement on the main western parking lot. Several Council members expressed concern about secure parking for night classes if most of that parking lot was taken up by construction. The Council expressed serious concerns about the planning of the new building and the lack of faculty input into the building design.

Dr. DeLotto adjourned the Faculty Council at 1:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Alexander, Associate Professor of History
Secretary