
FACULTY SENATE NEWSLETTER

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MEETING SUMMARY

Chairman Coohill began this last meeting of his term with announcements. He reminded the senators and visitors of the April 19-20 meeting in Frankfort and stressed the importance of a good turn-out to impress the legislators and dignitaries who will be there. He also reminded everyone of the reception for retiring teachers that will take place in the Faculty House following the next meeting of the senate on April 23 (a Tuesday).

COSFL

Because the report on work-loads and research and creative activities was to be the centerpiece for this session of the senate, reports were brief. Harry Robe told the senators that the Council on Higher Education has been refining its data on faculty salaries and now these figures are about as accurate and reliable as the circumstances allow. Western does not look overfunded according to the Council's amended numbers.

The problem is that the Council's numbers are viewed with distrust by legislators. These sceptics have commissioned another set of figures from one Larry Lynch of Transylvania University, figures that support a very different set of conclusions. Lynch has put the raw data through a number of statistical hoops of his own devising to reach the conclusion that all state universities except Kentucky State are overfunded, some by more than ten percent. Some legislators are mightily impressed with Lynch's report, which after all shows that higher education funding in Kentucky not only is adequate already but may represent an area of overspending begging for cuts in the lean years ahead.

Faculty Status and Welfare

Barry Brunson rose to announce that the Faculty Salary Survey would be available before the end of the meeting (and it was, but more on this later).

Professional Responsibilities and Concerns

Margaret Howe wanted to report that various topics of concern to faculty have been sent to Vice President Haynes and that she expects to discuss these with the Vice President in the near future. Here are the questions her committee

submitted:

1. Have the departmental promotion/tenure guidelines been submitted?
Approved?
2. Are the research/creative activity requirements reasonably consistent among the various departments?
3. Are faculty being denied tenure on the basis of research/creative activity evaluation?
4. Will the new evaluation forms used by the various departments incorporate the same reward guidelines?
5. Will the evaluation forms be uniform for all departments? (At present, on some university and public service are combined; on others they are listed as separate requirements.)
6. Is it true that, in some colleges, merit awards will require publication in refereed journals, while in others there will be no such requirement?
7. Would it be more fair if faculty members were allowed to submit a short document to be attached to the Department Head's evaluation?

Sometime in the future, the committee will report to the senate on its discussions with Vice President Haynes.

Margaret also gave an interim report on her committee's investigation of scholarships. At present the criteria seem heavily weighted in favor of "leadership" qualities, but there are signs to indicate that the university is moving more to reward academic talent. Ronnie Sutton is trying to raise money for new, purely academic scholarships. John Petersen is working on scholarship possibilities for honors students.

Academic Affairs

Edmund Hegen presented his committee's report on work load assignments in research and creative activity. (Your department senator should have a copy.) The report, he said, is divided into two parts, one based on a survey of faculty senators and the other an inquiry into university policies and practices.

As the survey-based part of the report shows, faculty senators who responded report quite a bit of research and creative activity and this activity is generally supported by the university. Since fall 1982 work load assignments for non-instructional activities have steadily increased.

Nevertheless, most respondents thought they ought to get more released time to do their non-instructional work, and they reported some delays and

setbacks on projects because of lack of released time under the present scheme of things. Other concerns of note included inadequate travel funds and a pretty clear indication that university requirements on reporting the results of supported creative and research projects are only lackadaisically enforced.

The great majority of respondents believed the university needs new policies on non-instructional released time, and 97% thought whatever the policies are they should apply equally to graduate and undergraduate faculty. Ninety-seven percent also favored peer reviews of applications for released time and a "full range of accountability measures." (Bastinadoes for the slackers?)

Only 48% of all respondents preferred a standard 21-hour-a-year faculty load.

Investigating the university record on research and creative support, the committee found reason to both praise and chide the powers that be. On the whole, Western exceeds benchmark figures in the amount of work load it frees for non-instructional activities and, as mentioned earlier, the availability of released time has been growing in recent years.

On the other hand, "non-instructional activities" does not mean research and creative projects. In fact, it's hard to be sure just what it does mean. Awards in this area can go for Funded Research, Public Service, and Academic Support, and reporting and proportioning procedures are too flaccid for anyone to be sure how much support goes to each type of activity. The committee's key finding here was that while the university does grant a respectable amount of released time to faculty, no one seems to have a clear overall picture of what they do with it.

Reflecting on their various findings, the committee presented four recommendations to the senate. Faculty seem to need more released time for research and creativity, so the committee recommended that the senate endorse Tom Coohill's "Ten Percent Plan."

Department and college policies on released time appear to diverge, so the committee recommended that the university establish a clear, uniform policy, which would also guarantee equal access to released time to all faculty, graduate or otherwise.

A fair amount of supported research presently seems to escape evaluation or even to go unreported. The committee recommended a tighter reporting procedure and peer involvement in evaluating applications for awards and project results.

Finally, the committee recommended that the university adopt some workable way of classifying load reductions. How many go for research and creativity, how many for public service, and how many for academic support?

Discussion

Joe Glaser still had problems with the "Ten Percent Plan," which calls for setting aside 10% of Western's faculty load time to form a pool of hours for which interested faculty would compete. Successful applicants (about 100 individuals at any given time) would get 50% load reductions to do research or be creative, perhaps for several semesters in a row. Glaser's objection was that without 10% new money to hire replacements (money that nobody thinks is forthcoming soon), the load from which one faculty member was released would surely descend on his colleagues. Then, at merit time, these colleagues would suffer again. In all probability they would have less of a case for merit, which in practical terms continues to mean research and publication, than their doubly-favored competitors.

There are other problems as well. Some departments are understaffed; some are not. Surely the number of released time awards a busy, harried department could absorb would be less than an overstaffed program could afford. Wouldn't this put several departments at an unfair disadvantage and give others an equally unfair leg up?

Nancy Davis pointed out that the university currently requires research (and also teaching and public service) of everybody, not just those who choose to put their heads in the lion's mouth. Does it make sense to make straight the path of a few to a destination we're all expected to reach?

Tom Coohill and Gene Evans replied at different times to this point. The university shouldn't expect everyone to be creative or to be a researcher, they said. Adopting the Ten Percent Plan would acknowledge what everyone already knows: not everyone is equally good at everything and people whose talents lay in a particular area ought to specialize.

Barry Brunson said that every teacher who's any good already does research, and a lot of it, just to keep up with his classes and field. Special dispensations for the gifted are fine, he said, but not until standard loads are lowered for everyone to reasonable levels--about nine hours a semester, in his opinion.

Harry Robe also spoke up for the troops in the trenches. UK, he said--the state's flagship institution--has a standard evaluation formula of 70% teaching and 30% service and research, but people are allowed to be evaluated up to 90% on the basis of teaching if they apply for a "Teaching Professorship," which can last for one to six years. Teachers in this program must document steps they've taken to improve their classes--including the kind of research Barry mentioned--and they get credit as if they had published or piled up some service credits.

Other UK teachers can go for research and let it count up to 50% toward their evaluation. These would-be stars, however, usually teach only three hours a semester. Maybe we need some sort of contract system around here to allow faculty to capitalize on their individual interests and abilities.

Instead, we seem hell-bent on forcing everyone into the research mold. Some departments will not promote or tenure a person for teaching, no matter how good it is. Recent Graduate Faculty rules extend this emphasis on research, but without making allowances for the extra time and effort scholarship involves. If 5% of our funding is for research, why not make scholarly and creative projects worth 5% of our evaluation and relative merit?

Liz Wallace said some research is not worth doing, much less worth rewarding, but Harry was not to be deflected. Teaching can be measured, he said, and measurements of teaching ought to be a big consideration in faculty evaluations, especially in the case of faculty who want to focus on teaching.

Joe Glaser said Liz was exactly right. It's the fact that much research is puny and worthless that accounts for Harry's implied thesis--that research and teaching are unrelated. Only bad research is unrelated to teaching. If you develop something genuinely worth saying to your profession, the experience and maybe even the details will certainly improve what you say to your classes. A danger with emphasizing teaching at the expense of research is that it can result in never putting your ideas to a rigorous test. People who talk only to uncritical students (or students who are at least careful to appear uncritical) run the danger of becoming complacent and uncritical themselves.

Ed Dorman wanted to know how a Ten Percent Plan could possibly be worse than a 3.5% plan.

Carl Kell thought public service should be allowed for in any formula for excellence. It should also be reported more fully to the public and the Council, because we do a lot for the public and owe it to ourselves to tell them so.

Barry Brunson thought all the talk of encouraging or discouraging specialization was wide of the mark. No one would be forever condemned to a research or teaching or public service specialty. The Ten Percent Plan would allow people to shift their sights from time to time. If they had a hot idea one year they could apply for research support; if not, they could try something else.

Dorsey Grice was afraid the committee's recommendations would generate more paperwork, reporting and justifying all those research projects. He doesn't like paperwork.

Nancy Davis thought 100 research reductions would be too few. This many awards would not cover the graduate faculty members, who must now try to meet the latest guidelines. Tom Coohill was of the opposite opinion. When he was devising the Ten Percent Plan, he did an impromptu survey which indicated that fewer than 20% of the faculty would apply for research reductions if they had to face an evaluation of their work at the end.

Having talked itself to a standstill, the senate voted to accept the work load report, including its four recommendations: the Ten Percent Plan, uniform work loads and equal access to released time, accountability and peer review, and detailed classification and reporting of released time activities at the university level.

GENE EVANS

Gene Evans has responded to our call for a position statement from anyone willing to be considered for senate chair. Here is his statement:

Recommended Priorities for 1985-86

1. Development and recommendation of strategies to promote Western's long-term survival and growth as an institution offering educational programs of high quality.
2. Establishment of a performance appraisal system for faculty which will: (1) be appropriate for professionals and (2) serve as a means for development as well as evaluation.
3. Broadening the base of faculty support for the Senate.
4. Strengthening cooperative relationships with faculty at other colleges and universities, in order to deal more effectively with problems of common concern.

Selected Relevant Experience

Chairman, Editorial Committee and member, Steering Committee, Governor's Kentucky Efficiency Task Force, 1968. Prepared all drafts of the task force report and recommendations for improvements in the organization and operations of Kentucky state government.

Kentucky Conference of AAUP: Vice President 1971-73 and 1974-75, Chairman, Committee Z, Economic Status of the Profession, 1969-71 and 1973-75. President, WKU AAUP chapter 1969. Chairman, University Government Committee, University of Kentucky AAUP Chapter 1964-65.

Present Committee Assignments: Senate Committee on Goals and Planning; Task Force on General Education; University Lecture Committee; Committee on Services for the Handicapped.

Past Committee Assignments:

Adjunct member of Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee (participated in the preparation of the report on athletics)

Senate Professional Responsibilities Committee

Graduate Council (8 years)

Academic Council (10 years)

University Task Force on Institutional Planning 1975-76

Special Committee on Retirement Systems 1975-76

Vice President for Academic Affairs Faculty Advisory Committee 1980-82

University Sabbatical Advisory Committee 1972, 1974, and 1979 (Chairman 1979)

University Fine Arts Festival Committee 1973-76

Committee Assignments at the University of Kentucky: University Honors Committee; Committee on New Teachers, Experimental Teaching and Teaching Technology, Executive Committee, Developmental Change Seminar.

FACULTY SALARY SURVEY

Everyone's favorite light reading, the annual salary survey, is now available, or should be. Your senator either already has a copy or can get one at the Senate Office. As usual, the survey is an epic undertaking, and this year it has several refinements allowing a much clearer picture than before of what is going on. Barry Brunson, chair of the Status and Welfare Committee, is surely to be commended, even though he doesn't think so himself. Barry sent in the following apology and explanation:

I apologize for what appears to be, in spite of 200 or so person-hours of preparation, a slipshod salary survey. It would appear less so (a) if it had not been completed at the last minute, and (b) if I had reserved a few minutes at the end of the last senate meeting to discuss it.

1. Please read the cover letter with the report.
2. If the various parts are detached and restapled separately in appropriate places, they are all conveniently readable.
3. On item (2), "All ranked personnel by high to low salary within rank," a double asterisk (**) just means that an "84" appears in the Rank Year column; they should have been suppressed.
4. Again on item (2), the various other footnotes (*, ***, ****, #, ##) should have appeared as single asterisks. Each such footnote indicates a position change (which may consist only of a change in contract months, a change from part-time to full-time status, etc.).

The tone of the report is not intended to degrade WKU, but rather to help provide ammunition for us in addressing those holding the purse strings.



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communications committee
NEWSLETTER