

## **Minutes of the General Faculty Council meeting held on February 8, 2005**

**Present:** Robin Kuzen, (chair), Chris Milner, Jean Collier, Ellie Wilson, John Wilson, Elaine Attridge, Nancy Gansneder, Jennifer Bauerle, Robbie Greenlee, Pam MacIntire (alternate for Camilla Curnow), Carol Hunter, Greg Strickland, Prue Thorner. Absent were: Lotta Lofgren, Phil Gates, Dawn Rigney, Bill Keene, Derry Wade.

**Guests:** Emily Bardeen, Christine Patrick, Alan Cohn, and Chris Wilson, reporter for the Cavalier Daily.

1. Emily Bardeen, director of Faculty and Staff Career Services for Human Resources, announced the establishment of a new award, the Educational Mentor and Manager Award, which will be presented to managers who support their employees' educational achievements. On the morning of March 8, there will be an educational benefits and resource fair in Newcomb Hall. Tuition waiver benefits and tuition reimbursement will be promoted. There will be exhibitors and the breakout sessions will focus on helping employees to set their educational goals and align them with career goals will be the theme of the event. Emily encourages pre-registration and asks Council members to make it known to their constituents.

### **Chair's Report:**

2. Michael Smith and Angela Davis will speak on diversity and equity as co-chairs of the presidential commission on this topic at our March 8 meeting.
3. \$6252 is currently in our operating budget.
4. As a member of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Charter, Robin has been invited to a Faculty Senate meeting tomorrow. She discussed what is known to date about the pending legislation, now called "covered institutions": there will be a three tier system to allow any public educational institution in Virginia to achieve degrees of autonomy. U.Va. will remain a state agency, and will not become a public agency, which is an important safeguard for employees. U.Va. will be in the most advanced tier with Virginia Tech and the College of William and Mary. After the legislation is passed, salary increases will probably all be merit-based. There will be a long-term management agreement negotiated between the state and the universities, and there will still be accountability measures required by the state. There is continued concern amongst legislators about student aid and keeping tuition affordable for middle income families. It is likely that more professional and general faculty positions will be created, since this category is officially recognized in the current version of the legislation.

### **5. Working group reports:**

Camilla Curnow has contacted Gertrude Fraser, vice provost for faculty advancement, about meeting to continue discussions about **professional development opportunities** for general faculty. Her work group has also proposed that a general faculty member of the year award be created to enhance the status of general faculty. Gertrude has not yet indicated her willingness to meet with Camilla or others in the working group.

Carol Hunter reported on **salary equity** and is attempting to set up a meeting with Anda Webb on this topic. The working group needs to collect salary data on general faculty positions.

John Wilson reported on **bridge funding** to cover temporary disability and to cover benefits for employees (classified staff and general faculty) whose external research funds are temporarily in abeyance. Ariel Gomez, vice president for research & graduate studies, is supportive on temporary disability funding through a centralized pool of money to cover the risk, but is not so supportive on funding for extended temporary disability leave. Prue is working to obtain data from Human Resources to quantify what the average cost to the University is likely to be for these two situations.

6. Jean reported on the **elections**. Deadline for nominations for new council members will be February 14. We need more nominations for administration, athletics, engineering, and student affairs. Everyone on the council should review their constituents and solicit nominations among them. Election will be first week of March.
7. Robin suggested that we will need a webmaster when Jean becomes chair of the council. Possibly the secretary could also track the operating budget and report on this at each meeting. It might also be more productive to meet less often than monthly. Possibly working groups could meet in alternate months between meetings. Council members should e-mail comments on these matters to Robin.
8. James Sofka is a general faculty member who was relieved of his position of dean of the Echols Scholars program in January, without any apparent advance warning. He has been told his academic general faculty teaching position will not be renewed in 2007 when his current contract expires. Sofka released a letter to the University community in which he asked for due process regarding allegations made against him. The expectation of continued employment has not been invoked because, although he is in his second contract of employment, his first contract was four months short of the full six years required. Thus, the University has announced that he has not earned the **expectation of continued employment**. The larger issue is whether he has received due process in regard to these allegations. Bill Keene has commented that innuendo has been released through the press without Mr. Sofka having any means of clearing his name. Robin asked that council members follow the case carefully to determine whether the Council needs to issue a statement. We need to know more about the specifics of the case to see if his right to a hearing has been violated. Mr. Sofka has not sought the assistance of the General Faculty Council. Nancy suggests that we highlight the policy on the expectation of continued employment as a guide to our constituents, and on the necessity for a hearing to substantiate allegations. This could be posted on our web site as a source of information for all general faculty members. If Mr. Sofka were to file a grievance, his case would be handled by the Faculty Senate Grievance Committee according to the University policy for academic general faculty.

The next meeting of the GFC will be held on **Tuesday, March 8 at noon in Newcomb Hall, Room 481**