

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

GENERAL FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

October 14, 1997

Opening Remarks and Background:

An Open Forum for all general faculty was held in place of the normally scheduled October meeting of the General Faculty Council. The Forum took place in the South Meeting Room of Newcomb Hall from 12:30 P.M. until approximately 2:00 P.M..

Doug Hurd, Chair of the General Faculty Council, opened the Forum with a welcome to the approximately 52 people (including Council members) in attendance. He also informed the audience that there were handouts available on the back table related to the General Faculty Council and its work. He encouraged them to look at both the General Faculty Council Web Page (<http://minerva.acc.virginia.edu/genfac>) and the Provost's Web Page (<http://www.virginia.edu/~provost/>) for current information concerning the current "Policy on the General Faculty" and proposed changes.

In June, 1997, Provost Peter Low sent a revised version of the 1987 "Policy on the General Faculty," that he and Paul Forch had drafted, to the General Faculty Council for their review. Provost Low was seeking the Council's reactions to these proposed changes. The changes were drafted at the request of the President due to a legal case involving the "Standards of Notice" provisions in the Policy. Provost Low attended the July Council meeting and encouraged the Council to review the draft and suggest changes (see [July minutes](#) for further description).

Prior to the July meeting, the Council was anxious to gather all the policies that affect general faculty and review them. To further that goal, an ["Index to General Faculty Policies"](#) was developed to more easily identify these policies that are scattered among many sources. The "Index" can be accessed from the Council's Web page. Following the meeting with Provost Low, the Council immediately formed a nine person Working Group to review the draft and work on any needed revisions. The Council also began to solicit input from other general faculty .

After providing this background, [Council members](#) introduced themselves and indicated the area of the University they represent. Reapportioning the general faculty is still a work in progress, but thanks to the work of Rob Walker Freer, apportionment for Council representation is better than it was. The 18 Council representatives have been assigned to cover the approximate 1800 members of the general faculty in order to establish a conduit for two-way communication.

Floor Opened to Comments and Questions:

People with comments about policy revisions should direct their remarks to their Council representative first; if you don't know who that is, then email the Council at gen-fac@virginia.edu.

The Council's goal is not just to reword the Policy, but to rewrite it to make it a better document. Once the Council has received proposals and input from general faculty, the Working Group will propose changes that will appear in a draft document on the Web for all to review. The minutes of all Council meetings are also on the Web, for those who want to follow the process.

Many general faculty have never had a formal evaluation. Some are being terminated, and then being asked to reapply for a classified position. The 1987 Policy states that an annual written evaluation is required. The Council brought this problem to Provost Low's attention at their July meeting, and as a result Provost Low sent out a memo to all department heads asking them to look into the matter.

Attendees were asked if they are required to prepare an annual report. Less than half in attendance replied that they did. The attendees were asked about evaluations: 6 or 7 replied that they have regular written evaluations;

10 or so had been evaluated sometime in their tenure with the University; and 6 or 7 answered that they had never had an evaluation at UVa.

The Council has already suggested the change in their draft to strengthen the wording that says that an annual discussion with the supervisor is a good idea, to be a "must."

The Council does not believe that there should be one evaluation system to fit everyone. Over half of those in attendance agreed that there should not be a "one size fits all" evaluation system. The Council wants the "Policy" to clearly say that there must be a face-to-face meeting with the supervisor to set goals and review performance. The Council wants to require a procedure - not necessarily a form. Goals and evaluations should be written.

One attendee said that he was losing his job. His boss was promoted which left him more than three steps from the Provost. He has been asked to reapply for his job as a classified employee. This led to a discussion about general faculty positions converting to classified staff. A Council member mentioned that Tom Gausvick had provided the Council with the 1996/97 "Consolidated Salary Authorization for Faculty Positions in Institutions of Higher Education" that includes a guideline that "administrative faculty" should normally not be more than 3 levels below the President. In practice, this is suppose to be converting, not terminating for affected employees.

The categories established in the 1987 "Policy on the General Faculty" were academic and administrative. At the July Council meeting, Peter Low when asked if there was a systematic effort to decrease the number of general faculty, replied absolutely not. In fact, as tenure gets re-evaluated, he sees the general faculty category growing. Leonard Sandridge said at the January, 1997 WFA Forum that this category has been very useful in attracting and rewarding good professional employees.

In the "abolition of position" section, no mention is made of time guidelines. Remarks referred to financial stringency (made by the President) doesn't apply to the actual situation mentioned above by the general faculty member. Financial stringency has never been declared by the University, and it is a very serious issue. Even tenured faculty can be let go - so not at play here in this person's situation.

One attendee encouraged us to close all loopholes in the Policy, such as language like "where practical," "reasonable opportunity to respond," and other words in the italics sections that need to be clarified.

It was clarified that "Standards of Notice" apply in any termination. Provost Low said that the same Standards will have to be changed for tenured faculty. A member of the Faculty Senate clarified that this issue has not yet come up at the Faculty Senate meetings.

The Chair asked the attendees how many have received notice of reappointment. Only 7 out of the entire group had ever received notice of continued employment. The concern is since reappointments no longer have to go before the Board of Visitors, the departments may not be taking the time to let people know. One person suggested that we should remove the emphasis from the contract period and focus on the time of the notice rather than the contract appointment. Only 10 attendees knew their current length of appointment.

One attendee mentioned that the proposed Policy changes needed to be regarded very seriously. He said that there were 90 lines deleted in the new draft and 50 lines added. He asked the question, "Was this cosmetic?" 100% of the group responded that they did not feel that the changes proposed in the current draft were cosmetic in nature. The question was also asked about whether Administration should appoint a high level committee like the 1987 Working Group to revise the Policy? The consensus was "No," because the Council was already too far along in the process.

The next step for the General Faculty Council Working Group after the Forum is to meet with the Vice-Presidents at Peter Low's invitation to begin the process of getting administration involved. The Council will continue to seek feedback from general faculty and administration. After the draft has been revised, it will be posted on the Web and another Forum will be held to seek continued feedback in the process.

An attendee raised the issue of leave for research faculty when there is a hiatus in their funding. They are currently being put on leave without pay and lose their benefits. There was a suggestion that the draft needs to spell out the process for research faculty who are going off and on funding . There was also mention that it would be nice to have professional leave as an option for all general faculty. There is currently no funding or time off for a general faculty member who wishes to pursue scholarly or professional studies.

The Council would like to see all the policies that affect general faculty put into a separate Handbook for the General Faculty, much like the Faculty Handbook.

The Forum ended at 2:15 P.M.

Next Meeting: November 11, 1997, in Newcomb Hall, Room 389, 12:30 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.

Submitted by Karen Grandage, GFC Secretary.