University Committee on Faculty Affairs

MINUTES

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Members Present: Jonathan Bohlmann, William Davidson, Catherine Ernst, Clark Johnson, Terry Link, Jason Merrill, John W. Powell, Hayder Radha, Patricia Schenck, David Solomon, and Vladimir Zelevinsky.

Ex Officio: Robert Banks, David Byelich.

Others: John Revitte, Donna Zischke.

Call to Order: Co-Chairperson John Powell called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: The boilerplate agenda used for the 2006-07 meetings was approved at the August 29, 2006 meeting.

Dr. Powell stated that Ms. Pam Beemer, Human Resources, and Ms. Kristine Zayko, Office of the General Counsel, would be attending UCFA today to speak about a recent Michigan Court of Appeals decision and its impact on domestic partner benefits.

Approval of Minutes: Dr. Powell presented the April 10, 2007 Minutes and they were approved without objection as stated.

Announcements:

Dr. Powell announced that Academic Council would be meeting later this afternoon. Some of the discussion topics will be the University Committee on Curriculum Report; Lyman Briggs School of Science - return to college status; Tenure and Permanent Residency Status; UCFA 2007-08 Faculty Salary Recommendations; Standing Committee Reports from the University Committee on Curriculum (UCC), University Committee on Faculty Tenure (UCFT), University Graduate Council (UGC), and the University Committee on Student Affairs (UCSA); and Executive Committee of Academic Council At-Large Election Results.

Dr. Ernst reported on attending Faculty Council last Tuesday, April 10, where their agenda items included: UCFA 2007-08 Faculty Salary Recommendations; Lyman Briggs School of Science – return to college status; MSU’s Religious Observance Policy; Tenure and Permanent Residency Status; President Simon’s Response re: Task Force II Report – this report remained tabled; Faculty Voice Task Force I Report – the bulk of the meeting was occupied with this report, and there appeared to be very little support for the dividing and reorganizing of some of the Academic Standing Committees.

Subcommittee Reports:

Budget: Catherine Ernst, Acting Chairperson Dr. Ernst reported that the Budget Subcommittee did not meet last week.

Personnel Policy: Terry Link and David Solomon, Co-Chairpersons Dr. Banks reported that the subcommittee had met and was continuing their review of policies, such as the Code of Teaching Responsibility and Leave Policies - they have been making mostly editorial changes where necessary.

Old Business: Ms. Kristine Zayko, General Counsel Office, and Ms. Pam Beemer, Human Resources, spoke
about recent legal developments that have impacted the benefits MSU traditionally offered to same-sex domestic partners. In November 2004, Michigan voters approved an amendment to the Michigan Constitution that states “the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement accepted as a marriage or similar union for any purpose.” As a result of litigation surrounding that constitutional amendment, the Michigan Court of Appeals issued a ruling on February 1, 2007 stating that public employers in Michigan may no longer offer employment benefits based on domestic partnership agreements. The plaintiffs have asked the Michigan Supreme Court to hear this case on appeal; however, there has not yet been a ruling on that request. MSU intends to implement a pilot program beginning July 1, 2007 for non-union represented employees whereby the eligibility criteria for health and dental benefits will be expanded to include “Other Eligible Individuals” (OEI). OEs are generally defined as individuals who are not a relative or IRS-defined dependent of the employee and who have lived with the employee for 18 months in the same residence in a capacity other than as a tenant. The pilot program will be evaluated annually, but is set to expire at the conclusion of the 2009-2010 plan year. Union-represented-employees covered by the current Health Care Agreement between MSU and the Coalition of Labor Organizations will continue to be eligible for same-sex domestic partner benefits through the 2009-2010 plan year during which the current Health Care Agreement will expire. This pilot program will be discussed on the Human Resources web page within the next week.

New Business:

- Dr. Solomon presented the report of the Personnel Policy Subcommittee on the annual review of the Faculty Grievance Official (FGO), Professor John Revitte.
  - Given the very difficult task of overseeing and mediating the faculty grievance process, we feel the feedback provided by these questionnaires indicates that Professor Revitte continues to perform superbly as the Faculty Grievance Official and deserves a significant merit raise for his efforts.
  
  Dr. Solomon made a motion to endorse the evaluation of the Faculty Grievance Official. Professor Link supported the motion. The motion carried.

- Dr. Powell conducted the 2007-08 UCFA chair elections with the following results:
  
  Chair .......................................................... Dr. John Powell  
  Budget Subcommittee Chair............................. Dr. John Dirkx  
  Personnel Policy Subcommittee Chair............... Dr. Jason Merrill  
  Assisting with Surveys/Other Projects............ Dr. David Solomon  
  Faculty Liaison to the Board of Trustees......... August 2007 decision

- Professor Clark Johnson shared his thoughts regarding the yearly UCFA salary recommendation. MSU has very good faculty they deserve a good salary. He feels that the salary recommendation should be simple – a 1 percent raise above the Big Ten average salary. His suggestion is worth consideration by the UCFA Budget Subcommittee for their 2008-09 faculty salary recommendations.

Next week, April 24, will be the final meeting of the 2006-07 University Committee on Faculty Affairs.

Dr. Davidson made a motion to adjourn seconded by Dr. Solomon. The motion carried.

Adjournment: UCFA adjourned to subcommittees at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elva Boyles  
Recording Secretary