

Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Minutes - DRAFT
May 7th, 2024, 3:30 – 5:00 pm
Tucker 127 A

Zoom link:

<https://cwm.zoom.us/j/93049097892?pwd=UGlrVmxzbW93TVBYVjVhc1FoRDVBdz09>

Meeting ID: 930 4909 7892

Passcode: 123456

- I. Approval of minutes from meeting on April 9th, 2024
 - Minutes of April 9, 2024 were amended to reflect corrected numbers of the vote on the coastal and marine science undergraduate major and were approved as amended.
- II. Update on new Blackboard (Mike Murphy, IT)
 - There are two notable changes as we move to Blackboard Ultra: a new look and feel and no longer being able to copy an old course into a new one using the Blackboard course generator. Mike has provided faculty with a 4-page document to note changes. Course generator will be able to copy from an updated Ultra course to a new Ultra course.
 - IT will be holding training sessions over the summer and will come to departments if requested.
 - Ultra Blackboard includes an AI function.
- III. Minor Amendments to Teaching Faculty Framework (for discussion and vote/approval: see tracked changes in attached. (Suzanne Raitt))
 - Two amendments are proposed to the Teaching Faculty Framework.
 - First, language stating that “Rank at the time of hire will be determined based on previous experience and rank at other institutions,” is removed to assure that candidates are hired into the position and at the rank that was advertised
 - Second, language is amended to clarify when the weighting of merit scores for each Teaching Faculty member will occur when considering contractual expectations for service.
 - The amended language specifies that Chairs and Directors will enter the score out of 9 to a pre-programed spreadsheet provided by the Dean’s Office. The spreadsheet will automatically weight scores according to contractual expectations by percentage effort according to rank.
 - The weighted score will be used by the Dean’s Office when merit raises are assigned. Average scores in each category for all faculty (TTE and TF combined) will be shared with the department or program faculty.
 - The two amendments are passed unanimously.
- IV. Merit templates for TF (for discussion and vote/approval: see attached (Suzanne Raitt))
 - Suzanne thanks the Teaching Faculty Committee for their work in developing a template for merit.
 - Departments will not be required to use the templates.

- Each department may adopt the merit procedures in the template verbatim or amend it. If approved today, the merit template will go to PPC and PRC. If departments amend, they should note that amending the template may cause delays in the PPC and PRC reviews.
- Suzanne opens discussion of the merit template document.
 - A question is raised about comparing TF merit scores to the average merit score of all the faculty members in a department.
 - An additional question is raised regarding the use of teaching evaluations in merit.
 - A question is raised about using merit scores at all for contract renewal. Suzanne explains that contract renewal requires both a continued enrollment need, and documentation that the faculty member has “met expectations.” Meeting expectations, therefore, requires a standard definition which is codified in the template document. Merit scores show someone had done their job satisfactorily in the past year. Using merit scores avoids needing to submit a full dossier of materials each time a contract is renewed. Merit scores occur each year and are a reasonable metric for “meeting expectations.”
 - A related question is posed about the distribution of merit scores across a department which could impact contract renewal. The variability of how scores are distributed from department to department may further impact use of merit scores for TF.
 - A suggestion is made to use language that couches the merit score in the context of the individual department. Suzanne notes that this would still require departments to determine how performance is evaluated.
 - A suggestion is made to include a length of time (“a number of years”) of “merit scores significantly below” the departmental average. This would be difficult to implement on two-year contracts but could work if the merit scores are aggregated across the length of one’s contract.
 - The personnel committees in each department will provide context if merit scores are significantly below the department’s average.
- An amendment is proposed to eliminate both clauses occurring on page 3 and 4 of the document, reading “a) Receiving a merit score that is not significantly below the department’s/program’s average combined score of teaching and service”
 - A concern is raised stating removal of both these clauses will make describing whether the faculty member “meets expectations” more arbitrary.
 - The question is called and the motion to remove these clauses does not pass. The clauses will remain in the document.
- An amendment is proposed to include the word “or” just after each of the clauses, to read, “a) Receiving a merit score that is not significantly below the department’s/program’s average combined score of teaching and service or”
 - A concern is raised regarding the use of the word “or” after these clauses with respect to equity and inclusion. Using the word “or” allows either merit or student evaluations to determine whether a faculty member has met expectations. Certain populations and those on shorter contracts are especially vulnerable to potential bias in student evaluations. Additionally, merit procedures are not consistent across departments or under different Chairs.
 - The motion to include the word “or” is tabled.
- An amendment is proposed to remove the clause reading “b) Consistently receiving student evaluations that identify specific areas of concern, such as, for example, in course preparation, or classroom performance” to avoid relying solely on students’ views.

Identifying areas of concern would be appropriate, but to do so solely from student evaluations is not.

- This amendment is tabled.
- A counter amendment is proposed to remove student evaluations as the sole assessment in favor of other forms of teaching assessments. The counter-amendment is proposed to read, “b) Consistently receiving teaching evaluations and other forms of assessment that identify specific areas of concern, such as, for example, in course preparation or classroom performance.”
- The counter-amendment passes unanimously.
- A question is raised regarding the mentoring of TF who do not meet expectations. Suzanne notes that this merit template document specifies the definitions of not meeting expectations and is supported by the TF Framework. Suzanne reads the relevant policies regarding the mentorship procedures from the TF Framework.
- An amendment is proposed to change the word “merit” in the clauses marked a) to “teaching score of 3 or below or a service score of 1 or below.”
 - An objection is made suggesting that this amendment doesn’t address the variance in teaching scores that occurs between units.
 - A suggestion in support of the amendment points out that using an Arts & Sciences-wide standard value for acceptable teaching scores would allow all units to know a value below which corrective action would occur.
- A suggestion is made to table the vote for this document in the interest of time. A faculty member notes that TF signed their contracts in April but have been waiting 12 months to learn how they will be evaluated. The question is called, and the merit document as amended is approved unanimously.

V. May Elections (Danielle Dallaire, N&E)

- The survey for N&E will be out in August. Chairs and Directors will be asked to identify people who are a good fit for committees. N&E will be working with the DEI Committee to increase faculty membership from all different areas, including TF whose service requirements have been codified. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

FA/FAC, one-year replacement for Area II (F24–S25)

Brennan Harris (Kinesiology)

Tate Twinam (Economics)

NEC, Area I

Jayson Lowery (Art & Art History)

Omiyemi (Artisia) Green (Theater & Africana Studies)

Note: while NEC will run this election for voting convenience, these candidates were selected by FAC directly. NEC has no role in choosing its own members.

VI. Report from the Dean (Suzanne Raitt)

- Procedures for handling potential disruptions at graduation and departmental ceremonies will be made available.
- The BOV voted to raise in-state tuition by 2.25% and out-of-state tuition by 3.3% in each of the next two years.

- The state budget will likely pass next week and includes a salary bump of 3% for state employees based entirely on merit.
- Our A&S party following our meeting will recognize our retirees and A&S awards.

VII. Faculty Retirements

- Chairs and Directors honored the retiring members of their departments.

VIII. New Business – none

IX. Adjourn