

DRAFT April 23, 2004

## **Report of the Faculty Life Committee of the University Senate**

### **Members of the committee**

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### **Areas of concern**

During the 03-04 academic year, the Faculty Life committee was given the following charge by the executive committee of the Senate:

#### A. Health insurance

We can expect another increase in premiums and a reduction in benefits. After the last round of changes, we succeeded in adding a Senate representative to the Health Care Cost Containment Committee. We will want to assess how the process has worked in 2002-2003, and whether faculty views received adequate consideration.

Some faculty members have raised questions about the availability of counseling and support services for faculty and recent changes and reductions in mental health coverage. Mary Yarbrough, MD, Director of Health and Wellness, and Jim Kendall, Organizational Manager of the Work/Life Connections-EA, have offered to talk to the committee about services available under the Physician's/Faculty Wellness Program.

Continue the discussion of health insurance for retired faculty and staff that began last year.

#### B. Faculty awards

The Executive Committee has written to the Chancellor, Provost, and Vice-Chancellor for Health Affairs urging a complete review and overhaul of the procedures for faculty awards. Faculty Life would be charged with developing a detailed proposal, to be presented at the November meeting of the Senate.

#### C. Faculty welfare and morale

The participants in the 2002 retreat identified inequalities in salaries, teaching loads, and leaves, together with the larger issue of faculty morale, as topics of concern. We did not pursue these questions in 2002-2003. This may be a propitious time to return to them. The question of faculty morale in particular is on the minds of many administrators and faculty members, following the suicide in mid-July of a young faculty member in A&S.

#### D. Review procedures for updating *Faculty Manual*

Work with the Office of the Provost and the Office of the University Counsel to develop standardized procedure for revising *Manual* and to assure a faculty role in the discussion

of any substantive revisions. Consider forming a task force with non-Senator members to review the *Manual* and propose revisions.

## **Completed considerations**

### Health insurance

The health insurance area remains a source of great concern amongst the faculty. However, the committee did not take any specific action regarding Health insurance for three major reasons:

- (1) 03/04 was the first year of a radically revised health benefits offering by the University. One of the major concerns going into the year was the unpredictability of the benefits offered by the University. The current program is intended to be more stable and reliable. The faculty have been assured no major changes are anticipated for the foreseeable future
- (2) The faculty is well represented on both the benefits and healthcare cost containment committees of the University, so to some extent the faculty life committee deliberations would be either redundant or unneeded.
- (3) The committee felt that we were in need of basic and reliable data on the faculty opinions and concerns. To generate these data we first focused on a proposed University wide survey. Unfortunately the survey was deemed unsuited to our specific needs for data. We have received a commitment by associate provost McNamara that he will take the initiative to collect the data we need through a specific survey of the faculty. Participation in the design, execution, and interpretation of the survey will fall to next year's committee.

### Faculty awards

The committee reviewed and approved the executive committee report on faculty rewards. A recommendation for Senate approval was successfully offered by the committee to the full Senate. Subsequently the report's recommendations were revised in negotiation with the University Administration.

### Faculty welfare and morale

The issue of reliable data dominated our concerns here. The above noted survey process is our final resolution to this concern.

However, the committee expressed the need to pay special attention to the concerns of retired faculty. Committee members participated in conversations with the University Administration and an initial survey of retired faculty programs at competitive institutions was conducted. As a result of these considerations we have made recommendations for our succeeding committee.

### Review procedures for updating *Faculty Manual*

The review of the procedures for the revision of the faculty manual was conducted by the committee. The following is the procedure as it currently is conducted:

*Anyone can recommend revisions to the Faculty Manual. Kevin Davis in the University Counsel's office has the primary responsibility for ensuring that relevant people and units in the University are consulted about proposed changes; in many cases, he is also responsible for crafting the wording of revisions. The Associate Provost for Faculty is also typically involved.*

*The University owns and publishes the Faculty Manual and is not legally obligated to consult with Faculty Senate about revisions. However, the Administration recognizes that the interests of the University are best served by consulting with Faculty Senate, and will continue to do so in the future. In recent years, these consultations have occurred between the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost's office.*

*In the past, new editions of the Faculty Manual were published when we ran out of copies of the existing edition. The most up-to-date version can be found on the University's website.*

This description of the procedure was provided by Associate Provost Timothy McNamara

After consideration of the procedures the committee has developed two proposals for immediate action by the senate and a recommendation for future action by the senate. The recommendations are a reflection of the following concerns by the committee:

- (1) The current revision process does not obligate the University to in any way inform, consult with, nor seek approval from the faculty regarding the revision of the manual. This is at least inconsistent with what the committee considers the general understanding of the faculty and is also inconsistent with what the committee considers the faculty's best interests.
- (2) There is no archival tracking of changes made in the manual to which the faculty might consult for their information.
- (3) As the faculty manual describes critical understandings of both individual employment expectations and critical inter-faculty and inter-unit relations, the lack of regular and necessary updating information to the faculty is of great concern. Currently there is no process through which the faculty is informed of changes to the manual. Reprinting is currently a function of supply rather than accuracy of the outstanding printed version. Thus new faculty and those faculty members requesting a printed version are potentially provided with an importantly out of date text.

## **Recommendations for Action by the Senate**

The committee recommends the senate immediately adopt the following resolutions;

- (1) That the Senate immediately creates an archive of any and every version, modification, and/or amendment of the faculty manual. Every effort is urged to create a archive which contains as much of the historical evolution of the manual as feasible.
- (2) That the Senate formally requests the University administration to inform the faculty of any and all modifications to the faculty manual in a timely and regular fashion.

The committee further recommends that the Senate create a task force to review the process of faculty manual revision with particular attention to recommending an appropriate formal and required role for the Senate.

## **Recommendations for succeeding Faculty Life Committee**

We recommend three areas for continuing work for the committee:

### **(1) Healthcare benefits**

As the faculty experiences the new healthcare plan and its intended development, new concerns are sure to emerge. We urge the faculty life committee to continue to work with the Senate representatives on the benefits and healthcare cost containment committees of the University to track these concerns.

### **(2) Retired Faculty Benefits**

The current committee developed a number of concerns regarding retired faculty benefits, but did not develop any specific recommendations. We urge the succeeding committee to focus on the following questions and develop appropriate recommendations:

- a. Several competing institutions (Stanford and Washington U. in particular) offer explicit programs to encourage older faculty to retire earlier than they are legally required. Such programs seem to offer advantages to the University in creating opportunities to refresh and renew the faculty and near retirees in their ability to more flexibly plan their futures. Should Vanderbilt develop an early retirement incentive program? If so, what should it emphasize and offer?
- b. Some competing Universities focus on continued engagement with the University by retired faculty (e.g. emeriti education programs), others focus on enhancing the quality of retired life (e.g. retirement planning programs). What should the emphases be for Vanderbilt?
- c. Healthcare stands as the most critical, costly, and potentially controversial of the retirement benefits. What can/should retired Vanderbilt faculty expect? Are there competitiveness issues?

### **(3) Survey of Faculty Needs**

Associate Provost McNamara has committed to surveying the faculty to assess morale, concerns, and needs. We urge the faculty life committee to work closely with the Associate Provost to ensure: that the survey is crafted to generate the data needed to drive future faculty life committee agenda; that the faculty responds to the survey; and that the data are collected and analyzed consistent with the interests of the faculty.