

**Faculty Life Committee
Vanderbilt University Senate
Report for Academic Year 2008-09
Chair: David W. Piston, Medicine (2010)**

Committee members:

Jonathan Retzlaf, Blair (2009) [Executive Committee Liaison]

Jose Medina, A&S (2009)

Jeanette Norden, Medicine (2009)

Tracy D. Sharpley-Whiting, A&S (2009)

Bonnie Slovis, Medicine (2009)

Benigno Trigo, A&S (2009)

Robert Weller, Engineering (2009)

Ellen Armour, Divinity (2010)

Kelly Oliver, A&S (2010)

Mary Yarbrough, Medicine (2010)

The Faculty Life Committee undertook five charges for the academic year 2008-2009:

1. Review any conclusions from the Board regarding technology transfer policies. Gather faculty input to questions regarding whether we should become more aggressive in this area as a university, and if so, how should we educate the faculty about this part of the university's mission. Gather information pro and con regarding the inclusion of patents as part of the promotion and tenure process. Work with the Administration on proposed changes to these policies and on any subsequent changes to the Faculty Manual.
2. Review the Provost office's proposed modifications to the faculty tuition benefit plan. These proposed modifications will allow the benefit to be used for courses offered in a "mod" (half-semester) system, as is used in Owen, and also permit the benefit to be used for courses taken at an accredited university other than Vanderbilt, subject to the approval of the faculty member's dean and the provost.
3. Review issues and solutions proposed by the University Administration around effort reporting. The current focus is on requirements for external grants and the relationship between academic year and summer month effort.
4. Follow-up with the Administration regarding the most recent Faculty Survey. Work with the Administration in defining the goals of any future Faculty Surveys, as well as defining the roles that the Senate should play in such activities. Coordinate the release of all data from the previous Faculty Survey so that the Senate may analyze the data.

5. Review the status and previous committee initiated reports on continuing health insurance as a retirement benefit. Focus consideration on potentially cost-effective solutions. Initiate a study of peer institutions vis-à-vis this benefit.

The Committee also added two other issues which arose during the year:

6. Work with the administration on University Central and the Medical Center to unify the timing of Spring Break. Encourage the institution to play a leadership role within the community with the goal of creating a unified Spring Break calendar between all educational institutions and systems in the greater Nashville area.
7. Focus on faculty wellness and assist in developing communication strategies for what is currently available, and collecting information about what else might be worth doing in this area.

Committee Report:

1. The committee examined and discussed the draft proposal from the administration regarding potential changes to the Faculty Manual. We collected feedback for faculty members across campus and identified several issues that were of concern, especially to the School of Engineering. After discussions with the new Provost and the Vice-Chancellor of Health Affairs, though, it became clear that this is no longer a top priority. Further changes in leadership have now pushed this issue to the back burner.

The committee, however, realizes that technology transfer is a potential source of discovery, revenue, and publicity for the faculty and the institution. Future Faculty Life committee action should be taken to follow up on this by gathering faculty input regarding whether we should become more aggressive in this area, and whether patents are appropriate for inclusion of as part of the promotion and tenure process in some parts of the University.

2. The committee reviewed and approved modifications to the faculty tuition benefit plan. This was presented to the Faculty Senate as a motion at the December 2008 meeting and approved by the entire Senate.
3. While effort reporting continues to be a source of confusion and angst for many faculty members in the heavily grant-funded disciplines, a comprehensive solution to this issue has not yet been developed by the University. The committee gathered some feedback from faculty and provided this to Associate Provost Dennis Hall in the fall of 2008. Developing a comprehensive plan with faculty input is a future consideration for this committee, especially as detailed proposals are developed by the administration.
4. The administration is not currently interested in further analysis of the Faculty Survey. This appears to have been a large waste of effort on the faculty members that participated. The committee recommends that future surveys be coordinated in

association between the Senate and the administration, and that clear goals and procedures be defined in advance to ensure the data is maximally useful.

5. The committee chair met with Jane Bruce and her team at HR to discuss several issues of concern, including the continuing health care benefits for early retirees. As a result of this meeting, Ms. Bruce made a presentation to the Faculty Senate at the December meeting detailing the changes in retirement benefits (as a result in federal statute changes) and the availability of continuing health care coverage that will be facilitated by the institution for early retirees. This health care coverage will be paid for by the retiree, but the institution can help make the transition seamless and help by offering a cost competitive plan.

6. The committee worked with Enrollment Management, the University Registrar, and the School of Medicine to align Spring Break across the university. This is now set for the years 2010-2014, and we expect this to continue in to the future after 2014 (although the School of Medicine schedules are not yet set that far in advance. This agreement required movement of the break time from both parts of campus, and Spring Break will now fall generally around the second week of March. The committee has encouraged the institution to reach out to other educational institutions and school systems in the greater Nashville area to see if a future plan for a unified Spring Break calendar is possible. The committee should follow up on this in future years.

7. In light of several high profile breakdowns in faculty wellness, the committee decided to focus some effort on faculty wellness. We found that existing programs are in place, but not well known among the faculty. These programs began in the Medical Center, but are now run through Vanderbilt Health and Wellness and are open to all University faculty and employees. The committee arranged a presentation to the faculty senate at the April 2009 meeting, and has facilitated several other School or Department level presentations. The committee should continue to keep this as a high profile effort so that the word spreads effectively throughout the institution.