Committee: Faculty Life

Chairs: Lynn Ramey, Wonder Drake

Members: Dietmar Bisch, Katherine Hartmann, Jami Miller, Daniel Barocas, Elsa Filosa, Scott Pearson

EC Liaison: John McLean

Committee Description:
To be concerned with policies relating to wages and salaries, fringe benefits, management of investments, employment of non-academic personnel, faculty intellectual property including copyrights and patents, buildings and grounds, space, campus communications, traffic, parking, food services, and campus security.

Committee Charges

Charge 1 - Determine what type of programming should be part of the Faculty Commons. Prepare proposal for the Vice Provost.

- Background: With the 2020-2021 development of the Faculty Commons as a physical space, there is a need to get the faculty to know about the space and use it.
- Goals: Come up with ideas for programming.
- Actions: Discussion in committee and with Derek Bruff about an open house in fall 2021.
- Outcomes and/or recommendations: Focus on this in 2021-2022 when faculty are able to meet together in person and use the new space. Open house will take place.

Charge 2 - Communicate regularly and openly with HR and University committees on benefits and parking.

- Background: This is part of the Faculty Life Committee charge.
- Goals: To make the committee and faculty aware of benefit changes.
- Actions: Faculty Life has a representative on the HR Benefits committee for VU. We met with representatives from VU and learned about the process. We gave input for several new programs.
• Outcomes and/or recommendations: Formalize VUMC faculty input on benefits and continue to seek greater meaningful/impactful input on decisions about benefits and parking.

Charge 3 - Design and distribute a parity survey of peer institutions' benefits.
• Background: We wondered what other institutions do to involve faculty in decision-making about benefits.
• Goals: We would like to make sure that we are using our time wisely. Are we serving in capacities where we have no real agency?
• Actions: Survey was modified to be a survey of faculty involvement in benefit decisions
• Outcomes and/or recommendations: Survey was completed and analyzed. We suggest greater faculty involvement in meaningful directions. We also suggest contacting Mercer consulting to find out their facts on where Vanderbilt stands in terms of benefits. A summary of the survey findings will be available from Jessica Brotherson.

Suggestions for Future Charges/Actions

Suggestion 1
• Continue to develop programming ideas for the Faculty Commons. Contact person is Derek Bruff.

Suggestion 2
• Act on report generated about faculty involvement in benefits. Consider doing a more extensive survey of benefits at other institutions and/or approach Mercer consulting (used by VU) to get data on where Vanderbilt stands in terms of benefits in comparison to other institutions.

Suggestion 3
• Continue to explore the disparities between VU and VUMC faculty access to benefits, student workers, and facilities.

Suggestion 4
• Look into faculty intellectual property rights in the digital age. This is a serious area of concern that has not previously been addressed by faculty senate and would appear to be the purview of Faculty Life.

Suggestion 5
• The student group encouraging university divestment from fossil fuel companies may come forward with a plan for engaging faculty. We would suggest making sure that the students understand that they need to take the lead on this but also that the Faculty Life committee will facilitate conversations with faculty and administrators. The committee may consider endorsing their proposal should they carry through with a proposed listening/informational session.