

Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday April 18, 2012, 3 PM, LeFrak Wetlab*
Friday April 20, 2012, 1 PM LeFrak Wetlab*
Minutes

(*Meeting held in two sessions to accommodate all members)

Present: L. Boschetti, G. Hurtt (Chair), L. Jones, T. Loboda, J. Nackoney, J. Silva

1. Review of progress on items from previous FAC report to Chair

a. Organization of Committee

- The committee noted that one or more members will be changing rank and/or affiliation, and requested clarification about process for replacing members who leave or become ineligible.*
- The committee noted that it has been functioning for two years, and requested information on terms of existing members, and process for replacing members when their term expires.*

b. Workload of Junior Faculty Members, Service

- The committee positively noted that the Chair has been receptive to keeping the service workload for Junior faculty members low, and positively noted that junior faculty routinely serve on not more than two standing committees and do not chair any standing committees.*
- Some members of the committee suggested that when combined with other committees the service load may still be too high, while others suggested it was appropriate and near the minimum needed.*
- The committee expressed interest in faculty having more choice on which committees to serve, but also recognized the need to balance this desire with the need for the Chair to efficiently staff committees with adequate and diverse representation.*

c. T.A. Concerns

- The committee positively noted the Chair's hiring of Dr. Keith Earwood and his expertise in teaching, and the potential for his working to enhance T.A. training and experience.*
- The committee positively noted the Chair's efforts to improve the computing environment for T.A.s.*
- The committee noted that while these steps are positive, major T.A. concerns noted previously (high workload, lack of mentoring and training, poor resources, etc.) remain.*
- The committee positively noted the Chair's receptiveness to develop/discuss ways to integrate the T.A. and G.R.A. experiences at the upcoming Retreat.*

d. Hiring Policy

- The committee positively noted the strategic hiring initiatives around theme of HDGC, and the entrepreneurship of multiple pending cluster proposals.*
- Some members questioned if the teaching program needs were adequately considered in hiring priorities.*

e. Quality of Incoming Graduate Students

- The committee positively noted the departmental efforts to staff and display booths promoting the graduate program at prominent meetings (e.g. AAG).*
- The committee positively noted the new website as an improvement for outreach purposes (departmental news, accomplishments, etc.).*
- The committee positively noted the new departmental name as likely being more attractive to potential new students.*
- The committee noted that while these steps are positive steps, it is unsure of the actual effectiveness of these measures and that steps should be taken to assess.*

f. Website Communications

- The committee positively noted the new departmental website as a big improvement over the previous site.*
- However, some on the committee also suggested that both additional refinements and changes to the user interface to improve logical flow and ease navigation are needed.*

g. Effort % on Grants

- The committee reiterated its concern that the Effort % reporting the university requests on grants is poorly and inconsistently implemented, and that unless or until addressed that this information NOT be used for important decisions such as merit or promotion or workload etc.*

2. New Items

a. Front Office

- The committee noted the importance of the front office, and the importance of the services they provide.*
- The committee also noted the exceptional pace of growth in the department, and the stress that this is placing on front office operations.*
- However, the committee also noted a lack of content among some faculty with the quality of front office services. Specific issues noted included: response times being slow/uneven, simple tasks overly complex, staff/operations siloing, and inefficient computer tech services.*
- The committee positively noted the Director of Administration's personal responsiveness to becoming more accessible and responsive.*
- The committee positively noted the Chair's efforts to add staff and reorganize some front office operations, though would like more clarity on the plan/scope for these and other changes.*
- The committee suggested that additional changes are likely needed to improve front office operations, and also that faculty need to be made better aware of front office operations and constraints, and suggested the need for faculty and front office personnel to work together to review key services, and to identify and prioritize needs and needed improvements.*

b. Course load

- The committee noted that teaching effort on independent studies classes, and honors, should count towards professor's teaching load.*
- The committee noted that there are many potential alternatives for implementing this, and that the department should study these options then vote to implement the best option.*

c. Junior Faculty Members, Teaching

- The committee discussed the potential for a longer teaching load reduction for tenure-track professors at the beginning of their career. While a typical teaching load reduction for one year after hire is positive, it was felt that a longer reduction, perhaps up to three years, would help junior faculty to establish their research programs and ultimately be more successful. The committee believed this is an important and complex issue which should be considered carefully.