

Minutes of COA meeting  
October 14, 2014

Present: Francesca Seaman (chair), Jim Benedix, Michael Roberts, Scott Spiegelberg, Larry Stimpert, Dave Worthington, Meryl Altman (note-taker).

Minutes of the previous two meetings were approved.

Continuing the conversation started over email, the committee agreed to approve the revised draft for a post-tenure review policy (see appendix below), and (later in the meeting) presented it to Larry Stimpert for his consideration. He will talk it over with the Deans and get back to us.

The main business of the meeting was to prepare for our upcoming meeting with Brad Kelsheimer and Amy Haug on October 28. Larry and Brad have discussed what would be most helpful for us to hear, and Brad is planning to present some models based on different assumptions about class size, the endowment, and fund raising success. The committee agreed with Larry that it would be helpful to see a list of what various items cost, and a concrete comparison of various tradeoffs and priorities.

This developed into a more general conversation about priorities: what do faculty members value, both as individuals, and when thinking through the overall good of the institution? Larry observed that “a college can have anything it wants but it cannot have everything it wants at the same time.” Salary is important to some, both in terms of keeping pace with inflation and meeting people’s financial needs, and also to be sure DePauw can continue to attract and retain a quality faculty by remaining competitive with similar schools. In looking at why people come to work here, and why they stay or leave, some committee members feel that other issues are as important or more important than salary: concerns about geography, hiring or non-hiring of a spouse or partner, teaching load, supportive or difficult departmental climate, adequate or less than adequate facilities. Another view advanced was that rather than trying to “buy” faculty or tempt people into a situation they might otherwise find distasteful, a better philosophy is to create a community where people feel like they are part of something, that they are appreciated, which includes that they are paid fairly but also includes other factors. Another point is that the quality of the student body, how well-prepared and motivated students are to do the work we would like to demand of them, can have a large impact on faculty morale.

One thing a number of us strongly value is the “step system,” which assigns salary by a formula based on rank and years since the terminal degree, rather than through individual negotiation at the time of hiring (which at some schools has led to “contraction,” that is, more recent hires being paid more than colleagues who have higher rank and longer service; the absence of a clear “step system” can also create and maintain gender-related inequities and other unpleasant anomalies). In the late

1990s, an equity survey was done and salaries were adjusted to bring us to this “step system”; the decision was also made then that special awards (such as UPs, DPs, Chairs, faculty fellowships) would be for awards for a certain term, rather than being added as a percentage to base pay.

One committee member asked whether Brad could estimate the cost of moving to a 3-2 load. This remains an important goal for some on the faculty. Some committee members feel that it might be too expensive, especially when “hidden costs” were factored in (for instance, if class size needed to increase, that might work against the tendency of prospective students and parents to be attracted by small class sizes). Some felt these and other “tradeoffs” involved in the plan developed several years ago by David Harvey and COA were unworkable.<sup>1</sup> Faculty opinion about “3-2” is far from unanimous, but it remains an unresolved issue.

We also had questions about what “comparison group” of other schools the administration uses. This varies: sometimes it is the GLCA, sometimes a more aspirational group. Larry explained that he tends to look at the group ranked 20 through 50 in US News and World Report, especially a smaller group of schools (the “here and now” group) which have rankings comparable to ours and where students applying to DePauw also tend to apply: St Olaf’s, Illinois Wesleyan, Centre. This led to a question about what those US News rankings are based on: they do look at faculty salaries, but other factors are more heavily weighted. About 20% is based on “reputation”: chief academic officers get a survey on which they are asked to rank other schools (there was a movement among chief academic officers to resist doing this, but it seems not to be working). A new factor is ratings by guidance counselors. The largest factor is selectivity of admissions: ideally we are aiming to get this below 50%. They also look at class size (number of classes below 20 and above 80), and here DePauw does very well. And they look at retention rates. Interestingly, our retention rate between the first and second year is very good, 93.7%, but our six-year graduation rate is not very impressive. This led to a brief discussion of what one committee member referred to as “the elephant in the room”: aspects of the social atmosphere for students, particularly in and after the second year, by which many of us are distressed.

Beginning to wrap up, Francesca updated us to ongoing business on FGSC. CAPP has been charged to reconstitute the “Admissions Committee,” to which COA should have a liaison. There is an ongoing conversation on COF about tenure standards, and we might be invited to talk with them. FGSC is also continuing to discuss how to move forward from larger conversations about shared governance. One member of COA suggested that FGSC might make sense if immediate past chairs of committees,

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to understand that COA and David at that time were directed to develop a plan that would not require *any* additional funding, so that lowering the base load for every faculty member had to be “paid for” by giving up the Faculty Fellowship program, giving up release time for many department chairs, as well as by allowing some classes to get larger, eliminating some very small classes.

**Comment [DU1]:** Editorial comment: It's unclear to me where, if anywhere, the discussion of 3-2 has been left, or where it could now productively be taken. My own opinion is that we ought to be looking at ways to get more people to, or toward, a functional 3-2 load by keeping the course releases that currently exist and adding more of them, like a bunch more fisher time-outs for people with projects, or maybe by rethinking how extended studies and student-faculty research could be “counted.”

**Comment [DU2]:** Is 80 the right number?

**Comment [DU3]:** I'm afraid I didn't write down the number, which would be good to include.

as well as current chairs, sat on it (since at present there is no “history” on that group); this idea seemed worth considering to a number of us. Francesca also suggested that perhaps COA, should be a coordinating committee rather than a consultative one, so that the committee could set its own agenda; the idea of a “budget committee” has also been suggested.

Finally, several committee members suggested additional items to be placed on the agenda for future discussions with the administration at some point. These included:

--The possibility of increasing the University’s contribution to the 403b plan, which would bring us into line with our comparison group and potentially save the University money;

--Making sure that the same 403b benefits are maintained for staff as for faculty;

--Continuing our commitment to treat part-time and term faculty as equitably as possible, both in the interests of the students and as a matter of fairness: providing multi-year contracts where possible, giving as much advance notice of teaching assignments as is feasible, supporting the “faculty development” for those not on the tenure track, generally minimizing the use of “adjuncts” and bucking the trend toward the casualization of academic labor.

The possibility was also raised of (at some point) revisiting the changes that were made several years ago to the retirement health benefit. These changes were based on severe financial exigencies at that time, but were otherwise undesirable, so might be kept on the agenda for another look if and when finances improve.

**Appendix: Proposed Handbook revisions** to “Personnel Policies,” section b (“Periodic Evaluation”) subsection d (“Evaluation of Faculty Members in Tenured Positions”).

**Comment [DU4]:** I am not sure whether this should be included in the minutes or not, but in case it should, I took a stab at making it intelligible to people who hadn’t already been part of our discussion. But see what you think, especially of the bit at the end.

**The handbook currently reads:**

*Evaluation of Faculty Members in Tenured Positions*

- 1. (In mandating merit awards, the Board of Trustees at its 1994 October meeting authorized the administration to change or supersede this paragraph. For current administration policy on evaluation see the special notice distributed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.) Every third semester, the tenured faculty member shall arrange to have student opinion surveys conducted in each course, according to procedures approved by the Committee on Faculty and the administration. These surveys shall be returned to the faculty member for his or her own personal development and improvement.*
- 2. Promotion evaluations (for associate professor and professor ranks) shall be carried out for candidates nominated for promotion to associate and full professor, using*

*the stated guidelines, procedures, and criteria for promotion. (See below.)*

*3. Requests for sabbatical and special leaves; released time for research, service, and innovative teaching programs; and grants for research projects, equipment, and continuing education are reviewed by designated faculty committees and approved by appropriate university officers if they lead to toward professional development of the faculty member and further the goals of the University.*

**We propose the following revisions:**

--Delete the first (parenthetical) sentence of paragraph #1.

*Rationale: It does not make sense, and is not currently being followed.*

--Keep paragraph #2 as is;

--Move paragraph #3 to some more appropriate section of the handbook, dealing with faculty development and not with the "evaluation of faculty members in tenured positions."

*Rationale: We have no objections to this, but what is it doing here?*

--Add in its place the following new paragraph:

Every seven years, the Dean of Faculty will send a personal note to each faculty member approaching a sabbatical and schedule a meeting to suggest developmental guidance and planning for the sabbatical. Interested faculty would be asked to submit an informal outline prior to the meeting to make the meeting effective and personally meaningful.

*Rationale: COA was asked by the VPAA in Fall 2013 to investigate whether some form of post-tenure review might be beneficial to the University and to individual members of the faculty. After studying how these matters are handled at other institutions, consulting AAUP guideline documents and other relevant literature, surveying the faculty, and extensive discussion on the committee, we determined that an additional layer of formal post-tenure review would create undue burdens (on COF, DPCs, and/or department chairs, as well as on those being reviewed) that would outweigh any possible benefits. The proposed change, in line with DePauw's current developmental philosophy, would create a periodic system for reflection, review, and planning, for those post-tenure faculty members who would find that helpful.*