

Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes

December 9, 2020

8:00 am – 9:30 am

Zoom

Attending: Kanakadurga Singer (Chair), John Pasquale, Mark Rosentraub, Annalisa Manera, Rachel Goldman, Rebekah Modrak, Michael Hess, Priti Shah, William Schultz

Absent: Sergio Villalobos, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Chitra Subramanian

Guests: Provost Susan Collins, Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost, Gloria Hage, Associate General Counsel, Martha McComas

8:02 Chair Singer called the meeting to order.

Gloria Hage introduced herself. She stated that she is looking for feedback for employment policies. Although there is already a nepotism policy, they are looking at relationships that start after the work relationship begins. The current policy does not cover whether this is permissible. She inquired about whether a policy should speak to whether it should ever be permitted where a supervisor initiates or enters into a relationship after the employment relationship has begun. She noted that many large private sector employers just don't allow it.

Members discussed their opinions on this topic. A member asserted that there should never be a time when a subordinate should be in a relationship with a supervisor. Another member stated that if a relationship is mutual, then disclosure should be required, along with a change to the reporting line.

A member noted the concern that if a policy prohibits something, then this could cause people to hide the relationship.

A member described an experience where a spouse who was a visiting scholar in the lab was required to report to someone other than their spouse in the lab.

A member asserted that there is a difference when there is a relationship when there is a power differential. Just changing the reporting structure will not address the issue when there is a power dynamic, such as in a lab when the lab director has a lot of power. If a department chair supervises instead, they won't be able to write a detailed letter. Real or perceived power dynamics are important to consider.

A member described relationships as evolutionary. A person may not when a relationship should be reported. It was also noted that a power dynamic could be temporary as administrative positions change.

A member noted that power dynamic is paramount. Community is narrow. People operate in silos and this impacts careers and changes the entire dynamic. He is closer to the thought that this should never happen. If the relationship goes bad, then one party may have adverse implications on another. It is the supervisor who has an ethical responsibility to resign. A member noted that the power dynamic is really problematic when there is a power dynamic from the beginning. Someone may feel like they don't have a choice but to engage in the relationship

It was acknowledged that power dynamics may even cross institutions.

A member stated that big changes have big consequences. Whatever is being proposed will affect people so gaining diverse opinions is important.

The group transitioned to discussing prohibition of relationships or the requirement of disclosure and a management plan. It was noted that the current disclosure policy could be enhanced.

Gloria will send the [SPG Close Personal Relationships policy](#) (name is paraphrased). The group will return to the conversation.

Gloria Hage left the meeting.

8:34 Winter semester planning

Martha McComas joined the meeting.

Provost Collins introduced the topic. She acknowledged that the student experience has been challenging, but that the focus today is on faculty. Items that are underway include:

1. Concern around childcare issues – work is underway with HR team. Tomorrow morning there will be a Record article on how the institution is trying to help. This isn't today's focus.
2. Finding new and better ways to support faculty in teaching – the upcoming COVID-19 update is going to provide updates about resources to help faculty with teaching.

The focus today relates to challenges related to research productivity and the challenges this presents for faculty. Provost Collins is starting conversations with department chairs. Given the current context, excellence should continue to be recognized while being realistically flexible. Provost Collins addressed some questions in turn.

1. How do we communicate with and reassure untenured and other faculty about the evaluation processes?

Member Goldman shared a proposal in the College of Engineering that takes the concept of modified duties translated to COVID which makes this a possibility for those with strong programs who have a need to get some teaching relief or service relief or whatever is needed so they can remain productive. This proposal was being considered by Academic Affairs in College of Engineering.

2. What needs to be communicated to review committees including external reviewers?

One member stated that due to the tremendous amount of time needed, those teaching larger classes will need more consideration.

A member inquired about what resources can be made available to support teaching, such as grading and making videos given that the teaching burden is quite high for some people, and jr. faculty are balancing childcare as well.

Martha McComas stated that getting information out to P&T reviewers is going to be critical. She noted that class size isn't always an indicator of the amount of work necessary to teach a course. She has also heard much concern from LEOs and grad students.

Annalisa Manero agreed that every faculty member's situation is different. Situations should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

3. The third question concerns views about impact statements. Due to time constraints, the group will come back to this topic at a future meeting.

The takeaway is that the number of impacted faculty is great.

Chair Singer requested a summary of feedback Provost Collins receives from chairs as we hope to continue this discussion next meeting.

Provost Collins and Christine Gerdes left the meeting.

9:00 Martha McComas asked the group what needs to be discovered through surveys conducted by the Committee on the Economic and Social Well-Being of the Faculty (CESWF). Many questions have been answered so far. What more needs to be discovered?

It was noted that getting information about how people feel won't be helpful if nothing will be done about it. Getting information about what people need may be helpful if those needs can be addressed.

It was suggested that leaders, such as deans and chairs, could be evaluated on whether they actively took steps to address difficulties brought about by COVID.

Martha McComas suggested having a cost-effectiveness discussion looking at research productivity, and she inquired whether UMOR could be engaged in this process, and whether there is a unit that could be an example.

Member Priti Shah offered to help analyze data if a survey was undertaken. She discussed with Martha McComas asking in a survey what would faculty need in an ideal world. She gave example questions, such as, In what ways will this support make you a better teacher or researcher? What enhanced productivity do you believe will result? Guiding questions could include what has been challenging, what concrete things do you need, and what outcomes would you expect if you had those things?

9:18 Martha McComas left the meeting

Both sets of minutes from October 28 and November 11 were approved.

9:19 Updates from COAA and WilmerHale Task Force

Member Goldman gave an update on the WilmerHale Task Force. They had a meeting 2 weeks ago. One person on the committee had been briefed on the consulting firm that was recently hired, Guidepost Solutions. The Task Force discussed what questions they can ask the consultants when they meet with them. She noted that the president wants the WilmerHale Committee to meet regularly with the consulting firm and be part of the process.

The consultants met with SACUA, and in February or March they will meet with AAAC.

Member Goldman stated that there is a desire to get a copy of the settlement agreement.

Member Schultz mentioned the Faculty Women's Club. There may be concerns about SPGs that come forward.

9:30 The meeting was adjourned.