



Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes
February 1, 2024, 1:45 – 3:15pm (Provost attending 2-3 pm)
via Zoom (virtual)

Present: Emmanuelle Marquis (Chair), Colleen Conway, Robert Deegan, Christine Gerdes (Special Counsel to the Provost), Bruno Giordani, Aubree Gordon, Matt Kaplan (invited guest, Executive Director, CRLT), Rahul Mannan, Ann Marshall (FSO), Luke McCarthy (FSO), Laurie McCauley (Provost), Damani Partridge (SACUA liaison), Jordan Siegel.

Minutes of Meeting: 02/01/2024
Circulated: 03/06/2024
Approved: 03/14/2024

1. In preparation for the arrival of the Provost, the minutes of the 01/18/2024 AAAC planning meeting were approved and members briefly discussed AAAC agenda items.
2. Matt Kaplan, CRLT, Executive Director, classroom discussions of sensitive issues
 - Recommended [CRLT](#) resources: [Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#), [CRLT consultation services](#) (also at crlt@umich.edu and 734-764-0505), workshops on “hot moments” that can be customized for academic units, and [CRLT Players](#) (*Conflict in the Classroom* will be available in fall 2024).
 - Suggested CRLT strategies: You don’t need to go in-depth. It can be helpful to just acknowledge the difficulty of the issue and that both students and faculty are struggling with these topics. If you are going to engage on a sensitive topic, it can help to have goals (What will I accomplish? Is there a connection to course goals, e.g. critical thinking), set [ground rules](#), offer a reading or media, and/or pose a question to frame the discussion. For small classes, the discussion could be going around the room, with a pass option. You could provide a prompt and ask students to write for two minutes.
3. AAAC conversation on classroom discussion of sensitive issues
 - Faculty expressed concern about external threats and about feeling it is too risky to help support having these conversations. There is fear the university won’t support faculty who face criticism or retaliation because of trying to have sensitive conversations in the classroom.
 - Students may hold faculty accountable by saying my professor said, “...”. When faculty try to have these sensitive conversations, students may make a complaint about the faculty member. Managing such classroom issues may be even more challenging for T.A.s and junior faculty.
 - The Provost offered that faculty are not obliged to share their opinions. Faculty can acknowledge that this is a difficult situation and state that it’s not their role to share their feelings. Some faculty may want to share and others many not.
 - Ground rules set at the beginning of the term can be helpful to handle sensitive issues that come up later in the term. This has been helpful in STEM classrooms.
 - Awareness about CRLT resources can be a challenge in some cases.
 - Supporting students with sensitive issues is also important in lab settings. Ground rules can be helpful, as well as considering how to support students during coffee breaks, etc.
 - There are challenges with social media, fake media, and information overload.
 - There is more interest and awareness of teaching at R-1 institutions than in the past, although this may still be a challenge.



4. Faculty underpayment concern related to 9-month salary adjustments

- The underpayment seems to have occurred due to how 9-month faculty salaries are paid across a 12-month cycle and in particular how the adjustment calculations are made when there is a faculty pay raise. At the time of the pay raise, there appears to be a one-month (May-June) underpayment. This one-month underpayment then repeats itself each year after the pay raise resulting in a potentially large salary underpayment.
- AAAC shared a specific example on the white board to help illustrate the issue.
- Faculty expressed concern that HR did not initially respond to multiple emails. HR did provide a table of how the payments are made which seemed to support a potential ongoing underpayment issue. Faculty don't think the underpayment was intentional, but wonder if the potential error could nevertheless raise issues regarding proper compensation practices and/or in relation to federal grant procedures.
- The Provost's office has begun to look into the issue, including how other peer institutions handle 9-month to 12-month payment processes.

5. Committee Discussion

- After the Provost left the meeting, there was some AAAC committee discussion related to AAAC next steps.

Upcoming meetings:

March 14, 1:45-3:15 pm, AAAC meeting (with the Provost attending 2-3 pm)

April 17, 9:45-11:15 am, AAAC meeting (with the Provost attending 10-11 am)

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marshall, Faculty Governance Coordinator (FSO)