

FACULTY COUNCIL
Tuesday, March 11, 2025
3:30 – 5:15 pm
Seminar Room (2520D), University Capitol Centre

MINUTES

Councilors Present: R. Curto, A. Farag, C. Fox, N. Greyser, J. Gutierrez, J. Koch, M. McQuistan, M. Schroeder, A. Shibli-Rahhal, C. Vogel.

Officers Present: R. Curtu, E. Gillan, C. Just, C. Sheerin.

Councilors Excused: L. Durairaj, J. Kline, M. Santillan, D. Shane.

Councilors Absent: M. Abou Alaiwa, C. McMillan, J. Sa-Aadu.

Guests: M. Gardinier (Emeritus Faculty Council), L. Geist (Interim Vice President for Research and Office of the Provost), A. Hanson (Office of the Provost), P. Matthes (Office of the President), B. Thomas (Tippie College of Business and Office of the Provost), B. Walker (Governmental Relations Committee), E. Watson (Daily Iowan), B. Wilson (President), D. Witt (Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee), L. Zaper (Faculty Senate Office).

I. Call to Order – President Sheerin called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

II. Approvals

- A. Meeting Agenda – Professor Fox moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- B. Faculty Council Minutes (January 28, 2025) – Professor Vogel moved and Professor Schroeder seconded that the minutes be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- C. Draft Faculty Senate Agenda (March 25, 2025) – President Sheerin indicated that changes may be made to the draft agenda prior to the Senate meeting. Professor Vogel moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the draft agenda be approved. The motion carried unanimously.
- D. Committee Appointments (Rodica Curtu, Chair, Committee on Committees) –
 - *None at this time*

III. New Business

- *Update from Faculty Senate Governmental Relations Committee Chair Beth Walker and Pete Matthes, Vice President for External Relations and Senior Advisor to the President*
Professor Walker explained that the Governmental Relations Committee serves as a medium for communication between faculty and the university's [Office of Governmental Relations](#). At meetings, the members of the committee report concerns that have been circulating among their faculty colleagues. Staff members of the Office then respond to these concerns and provide updates on issues at the local, state, and federal levels. Professor Walker, as chair of the

committee, also attends bi-weekly legislative update meetings hosted by the Office for administrators and shared governance leaders. Mr. Matthes praised the efforts of members of the Office's staff, Keith Saunders at the state level and Leanne Hotek and Brendan Beeter at the federal level.

Turning to the state legislature, Mr. Matthes noted that this year's legislative session began in mid-January. The first funnel was reached on March 7. Mr. Matthes explained that a funnel is a self-winnowing process that the state has implemented to reduce the approximately 1500 bills introduced every session down to the approximately 150 bills that make it through the entire legislative process. A bill must be passed out of subcommittee and full committee in the originating chamber in order to survive the first funnel. The second and last funnel will occur on April 4. To survive the second funnel, the bill must pass a floor vote in the originating chamber and then be passed out of subcommittee and full committee in the other chamber. Other key events in the legislative cycle are the quarterly meetings of the Revenue Estimating Conference, a group of three individuals who predict the state's revenue, thus setting the framework for the state's budget discussions. Mr. Matthes indicated that there would be much floor activity in the next few weeks as legislators try to move their bills through the committees of each other's chambers. The focus in the first three months of the session is on policy bills. As that work winds down in late March and April, focus will shift to appropriations and spending. Mr. Matthes noted that the funnel does not apply to two types of bills, those dealing with appropriations and with taxes. The legislature is scheduled to conclude its work in May. Legislators receive a per diem for the first 110 calendar days in odd-numbered years and for the first 100 calendar days in even-numbered years. A state budget must still be passed, though, however long it takes.

At the federal level, the government is scheduled to shut down at midnight on Friday, March 14, if a budget bill is not passed, Mr. Matthes continued. The U.S. House of Representatives will vote today on a continuing resolution, which provides for the continuing implementation of the original fiscal year budget, although with some slight adjustments. Should the continuing resolution pass the House, it would then move to the Senate, where 60 votes are required for approval. In case of a shutdown, some components of the government will still continue to function. Another looming issue for Congress is the budget framework that the House of Representatives passed to the Senate several weeks ago. This framework serves as a basis for discussion of appropriations. The Senate will now need either to accept what the House passed or send it back to the House with some amendments. At this time, it seems that the latter is more likely. Reconciliation is a parliamentary process through which bills can be passed with a simple majority in the Senate. Both parties have used this process to their advantage in the past and it may be used again in this situation.

Professor Curto asked about the role of the Iowa Board of Regents. Mr. Matthes responded that the Regents play a very important role in advocating for the institutions and engaging with our state legislators on a consistent basis. The state relations officers are employees of the Board, but are each assigned to a specific university. The state relations officers engage with legislators throughout the legislative session.

- *Executive Session: President Barbara Wilson*

Professor Vogel moved and Professor Schroeder seconded that the Faculty Council move into executive session, inviting President Wilson, Professor Walker, and Mr. Matthes to join them. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilors discussed issues of concern to the university with President Wilson.

Professor McQuistan moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the Faculty Council move out of executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

- *Faculty Policy Revision (Doris Witt, Chair, Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee; Caroline Sheerin; and Ed Gillan)*

President Sheerin indicated that today, following several Council meetings during which the group had heard detailed presentations regarding proposed changes to the university's [Faculty policy](#), the proposed policy revision would be put forward for a vote by the Council. The Faculty policy governs faculty on all tracks, including the tenure, clinical, research, and instructional tracks, and provides policies at the university level for faculty activities involving academic freedom, tenure, promotion, rank criteria, etc. Each college also has its own policies on these matters, but the collegiate policies must align with the university policy. President Sheerin noted that in the past several years, the Council and Senate have approved changes to portions of the Faculty policy, primarily affecting the specialized tracks (clinical, research, and instructional). The focus of the most recent proposed revisions has been mainly on the tenure track. The Faculty policy has been written and modified at various points over the last fifty years, President Sheerin continued, leading to numerous instances of internal inconsistencies and outdated language, which have been remediated in the current proposed revision, as well.

The timeline for this latest revision began last May. President Sheerin noted that she had joined the faculty/administrator work group that had successfully created revisions to the [Faculty Dispute Procedures](#) just a week after becoming Senate President at the end of April. The work group members also include Chair Witt, Past President Gillan, Associate Provost for Faculty (and Interim Vice President for Research) Geist, Deputy General Counsel Lukas, Deputy Counsel Byrd, and Deputy Counsel Shust, with Senior Director of Faculty Human Resources Hanson sitting in to provide implementation procedure expertise. Tippie College of Business Executive Associate Dean Thomas has begun sitting in on meetings, as well, in preparation for assuming the role of Associate Provost for Faculty in July. President Sheerin praised the work group members for exemplifying shared governance at its best. The work group has been meeting every two weeks since May. Throughout this timeframe, the faculty members of the work group have continually updated the Faculty Senate's Faculty Policies and Compensation Committee (FPCC) on policy revision progress and have sought feedback from FPCC to inform the work group's discussions. Reports have been made to and feedback obtained from Council and Senate as well. Feedback from FPCC, Council, and Senate played a significant role in shaping proposed revisions to the policy. Eventually, the proposed revision was judged to be in its final form and was presented to FPCC for a vote.

President Sheerin then gave a brief overview of the proposed revisions to the Faculty policy, noting that much of this information was familiar to the Council from updates at previous meetings. She indicated that the policy introduction was revised to account for the important roles that specialized-track faculty play at the university. Written in the 1970's, prior to the establishment of the other three tracks, the original introduction strongly emphasized the importance of tenure to both teaching and research and was therefore somewhat off-putting to faculty on the other tracks. Structurally, the policy sections were reorganized to make the policy more streamlined and cohesive. The proposed revised policy now clarifies that tenure and promotion decisions must be based on unit written standards. Updates were also made to the post-tenure review process; these were the components of the proposed revision that precipitated the most discussion within FPCC, Council and Senate.

Turning to the proposed changes made to the post-tenure review process, President Sheerin reminded the group that, upon receiving tenure, in addition to annual reviews with the unit head, faculty members also undergo peer reviews every five years. The proposed policy revision introduces an out-of-cycle peer review, which can only be triggered when two consecutive annual reviews following a peer review identify significant and ongoing performance issues that have not been remediated. The out-of-cycle peer review might lead to the implementation of a development plan. Any adjustment to effort allocation can only occur if the development plan does not result in improved performance. President Sheerin emphasized that protections for faculty members have been built into the out-of-cycle peer review process, so that improvement remains the goal of the process. General protections for faculty embedded into the policy permit faculty members to file a grievance at any time under the Faculty Dispute Procedures process and require a review of the policy after five years.

President Sheerin then described protections for faculty members at specific points in the out-of-cycle peer review process. She reiterated that the out-of-cycle peer review can *only* be triggered after one five-year post-tenure review is followed by two sequential unit head annual reviews. The performance issues identified by the annual reviews *must* be significant and ongoing. Remediation *must* have been attempted and failed. The faculty member can *appeal* the composition of the peer review committee to the dean and provost. (This is not an option for standard peer reviews.) The unit head will provide the committee with the relevant annual reviews, *along with* any faculty response. The faculty member can submit *additional* materials to the committee. Review materials will be consistent with the *regular* five-year peer review process. Recommendations from the peer review will be designed to *facilitate and encourage professional vitality*. The development plan *cannot* entail effort allocation changes *unless* the faculty member agrees to them. If the faculty member does *not* agree to any part of the development plan, they can *appeal* to the dean and the provost. Effort allocation can *only* happen if the faculty member fails to make significant progress in meeting the milestones of the plan.

Chair Witt then presented the results of the FPCC vote on the proposed revised Faculty policy. She indicated that throughout the fall and spring semesters, she had strongly encouraged the FPCC members to voice any concerns they had about the evolving draft of the proposed

revised policy. When the time came to vote on the proposed revision, FPCC members were offered a scale of one through five, so that the nuances of their views would not be reduced to an “up or down” vote. As chair and as a member of the work group, Chair Witt did not participate in the voting. Neither did the Senate officers. The seven FPCC members voted as follows: **one** vote for option 1 (*totally opposed*), **zero** votes for option 2 (*grave concerns*), **two** votes for option 3 (*some concerns*), **three** votes for option 4 (*support decision*), and **one** vote for option 5 (*whole-heartedly support decision*).

Following up on President Sheerin’s remarks, Chair Witt noted that FPCC reviewed the proposed revision in three main stages, covering the introduction, post-tenure review, and all of the other sections of the policy. FPCC members provided useful input on the introduction and the non-review portions; much of this feedback was incorporated into the drafting. Proposed revisions to the introduction were particularly well received by FPCC members, who appreciated the goal to craft a shared vision of what it means to be UI faculty in an era when *faculty* no longer refers only to those on the tenure track. The efforts at streamlining and reorganizing the tenure track policy were also positively received, indicating a comfort with regular review and updating of policy in a collaborative shared governance process, resulting in policies that are clear, accurate, and succinct. The final vote count reflected finely grained differences of opinion that arose regarding whether and how to revise the policy regarding post-tenure review.

The vote count includes one strongly dissenting opinion, based solely on an analysis of the post-tenure review revision, Char Witt continued. This opinion identified potential costs in granting unit heads the ability to call for an early ad hoc peer review and then to begin implementing a performance improvement plan. The opinion expressed concern that academic freedom might be compromised if faculty members feel that they must shape their research agendas to comport with the anticipated demands of their unit heads. Factionalism within units might result in peers feeling pressure to take sides. This voter did not find that enough evidence was presented about the nature of existing problems to support the conclusion that changes were so necessary and so effective that they would outweigh these and other potential costs.

Chair Witt noted, however, that the other six committee members, who all offered higher rankings, considered all the same information, including the full version of this dissenting argument. They were anywhere from more to very persuaded by the argument that the current approach to post-tenure review needs to be revised and were anywhere from more to very accepting of alternate approaches to enhance unit head power within specific constraints. They gave more weight to the costs to the institution of allowing situations in which tenured faculty are truly underperforming to drag on for as much as a decade with no repercussions, especially while non-tenure-track faculty members undergo highly consequential annual reviews. These voters felt that the proposed policy revision provides tenured faculty members with adequate protection from administrative misconduct. Most FPCC members expressed appreciation for the strength of the shared governance process, and even if they harbored reservations, wanted to convey by their vote this appreciation for administration’s commitment to working with faculty on policy revision and their understanding that shared governance typically requires both sides to make compromises, as occurred here.

Chair Witt further explained that FPCC members with reservations who voted at the three and four levels were expressing a dissatisfaction not so much with this proposed revision, but instead their belief that additional supplementary institutional changes are needed, as well. For example, some FPCC members believed that the university does not sufficiently address situations in which unit leadership is a contributing problem to what might be perceived by administrators as faculty underperformance. Others felt that efforts should be made to improve the existing peer review process, so that it truly helps faculty members succeed in highly demanding roles. Chair Witt concluded her remarks by stating her belief that it is a sign of a healthy shared governance ecosystem when the FPCC members felt able to dwell on the complexity of their responses. She had conveyed to the FPCC members her intention to characterize the vote as an endorsement of the proposed revision by a very clear majority. No one disputed that interpretation. Chair Witt thanked all the members of the work group for their participation in the process.

Professor Curto asked what would happen if an out-of-cycle peer review does not corroborate the concerns raised in the two negative annual reviews. Chair Witt indicated that it was her understanding that, in this situation, the unit head might confer with higher administrators and could move toward implementing a development plan, although could not institute an effort allocation. Nevertheless, the unit head would likely proceed carefully in the absence of support from the report of the peer review committee. If the faculty member chose to file a dispute, the positive peer review report would be significant evidence in the faculty member's favor. Professor Curto asked if development plans would have a timeline. President Sheerin observed that there is no language in the proposed revised policy on timelines. The development plan should take place within a reasonable period of time, however, perhaps at least a year. Past President Gillan, a member of the work group, commented that the tracked-changes version of the proposed revised policy reflects considerable change to the policy. Nevertheless, the traditional and substantial protections and responsibilities of the tenure-track faculty codified decades ago in the policy have largely remained the same throughout this revision process.

Professor Curto moved and Professor Shibli-Rahhal seconded that the proposed revised Faculty policy be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

- *President's Report (Caroline Sheerin)*
President Sheerin had no pressing items to report.

IV. From the Floor – There were no items from the floor.

V. Executive Session

Professor Schroeder moved and Professor Fox seconded that the Faculty Council move into executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

President Sheerin announced the recipients of the 2025 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence and the Michael J. Brody Award for Faculty Excellence in Service to the University and the State of Iowa.

Professor Fox moved and Professor Farag seconded that the Faculty Council move out of executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Announcements

- The next Faculty Senate meeting will be Tuesday, March 25, 3:30 – 5:15 pm, Senate Chamber, Old Capitol.
- The next Faculty Council meeting will be Tuesday, April 8, 3:30-5:15 pm, Executive Boardroom (2390), University Capitol Centre.

VII. Adjournment – Professor Fox moved and Professor Schroeder seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously. President Sheerin adjourned the meeting at 5:15 pm.