UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
2012-13 FACULTY SENATE  

APRIL 29, 2013                    MINUTES SUMMARY

I. Roll – The following senators were absent: Connelly, Guo, Harrist, Hartter, Johnson, Kaen, Minocha, Scherr, Shore, and Simos. A guest was John Aber.

II. Remarks by and questions to the provost – The provost said that he recently attended the Undergraduate Research Conference, which is a celebration of academic excellence at UNH. About 1300 UNH undergraduate students, from all academic disciplines, presented research at this conference, to showcase the results of their scholarly, engaged and creative research. The provost also mentioned the archeological dig at the site of the old train station and has enjoyed presentations by the Confucius Institute. The provost added that the senate chair and vice chair came to the dean’s council recently to discuss issues regarding non-tenure-track faculty. Today the senate chair also attended the signing by the university president of the document creating the new School of Marine Science and Ocean Engineering.

III. Remarks by and questions to the chair – The senate chair said that the final meeting of the Faculty Senate for this academic year will be next Monday, May 6.

IV. Minutes – The minutes of the last senate meeting were approved with all ayes except for one abstention.

V. Teaching Evaluation Form Implementation Committee’s motion on web-based evaluations for all courses – At the 4/15/2013 senate meeting, on behalf of the Teaching Evaluation Form Implementation Committee, Barbara White presented a motion as follows.

The committee recommends making a gradual transition from paper/pencil-based evaluation to electronic web-based evaluation for all courses over a time period sufficient to establish comparability between the methods. Once comparability has been assessed, changes or additions to the question set will be explored (through field testing). Departments and other academic units for the pilot will be selected by consultation between department chairs and deans, as to which departments and programs participate in the pilot. For compelling reasons, in keeping with current policies on exemptions, individual faculty may request of their chair an exemption from the pilot. Such a request must be approved by the dean.

The rationale of the motion is as follows.

The ad hoc committee charged with revising the teaching evaluations for UNH courses has, after careful consideration and study, defined two critical issues upon which we need to make decisions. The first is how to make a transition to on-line delivery. It is the committee’s opinion that UNH will likely ask us to move in this direction and that the faculty has the opportunity now to shape how this transition occurs. The second issue before the committee is revision of the questions asked in the evaluation. Heeding expert advice and suggestions given to the committee, we recommend that each of these important issues be handled separately. Due to the timely need of moving to web-based course evaluations for e-UNH courses, we recommend handling web-based evaluations
first. The recommended time to assess transition effects on the different method of evaluation is four semesters. Once we have an assessment plan implemented for web-based course evaluations, we will, in the next year, present suggestions on evaluation questions to the senate.

The committee, by a vote of seven to one, agreed to bring this motion forward to the senate, based on the following factors. (1) The committee sought feedback from all faculty on the following question. “For the evaluation of traditional ‘face to face’ classes, would you favor a move to a fully on-line course evaluation system, providing the following two conditions could be met, that student completion of the form would be at or above current levels and that assurance of confidentiality would be at or above current levels?” Though there were some departments and individuals that stated that they did not support such a move, a majority of the faculty and departments that responded to the question were in favor of the transition to web-based teacher evaluations. (2) Based on consultations with various UNH faculty, staff and administrators with expertise in fields related to surveys and teaching excellence, as well as research provided by the team working on teacher evaluations for e-UNH courses, the committee concluded that the overall quality of evaluation responses would not be diminished by a move to a web-based system. (3) The primary concern faculty expressed about web-based teacher evaluations was centered on completion rates. The committee concluded that there were several models of incentives used, by institutions around the country for web-based teacher evaluations, that could easily be utilized by UNH to achieve acceptable results within the range of the current completion rate (76%). Some incentives (that the student does not receive the grade until the evaluation has been completed, for example) can assure a near 100% completion. (4) Web-based evaluation systems offer far greater flexibility to easily construct sets of questions that can include university-wide questions, college-wide questions and questions specific to course categories (Discovery, Inquiry, large survey classes, etc.). Most faculty members are in favor of having a system with this amount of flexibility. There is no cost effective way this can be achieved using a paper system. (5) Web-based systems make it far easier for instructors to create and execute their own questions. (6) Web-based systems allow teachers of courses as well as chairs and administrators easily and quickly to analyze the course evaluation data in multiple ways. (7) Research has not revealed that confidentiality is in any way compromised when utilizing a web-based evaluation system. (8) Though there may not be a drop in the overall cost of a web-based system, from a sustainability viewpoint the elimination of the paper and energy used for the current system will be substantial.

This motion was sent to the senators on email. Today after senators spoke for and against the motion, it passed with seventeen ayes, sixteen nays and two abstentions.

VI. Promotion and Tenure Standards Oversight Committee’s report on promotion and tenure issues – Jeff Diefendorf, who is the chair of the ad-hoc Promotion and Tenure Standards Oversight Committee, presented its report today. The full report has been sent to the senators on email. This is a progress report, not a final report, since the committee was not constituted until January and most deans were reluctant to comply with the 4/23/2012 senate motion
urging them to appoint a representative of their administrative body. The committee realizes that different disciplines will naturally have different standards. All units, however, should discuss the issues and recommendations and then incorporate the unit's decisions into its standards. Like last year's report, this new committee is concentrating on standards for promotions at all ranks, not on procedures.

The main promotion standards issues include the following. (1) There should be written standards documents, including for promotion to the rank of full professor. The documents should be reviewed periodically and made available to newly hired faculty and faculty eligible for promotion. (2) Departments and units should be clear about what is meant by service, outreach, and engagement and what the expectations in these areas are. For example, does a department expect service beyond the departmental level or university level? How much service is expected, and does this differ for assistant and associate professors? Is advising undergraduates and graduate students considered service or teaching? (3) What standards are used by a unit to evaluate teaching? If the standard course evaluations are used, what scores are expected? If qualitative evidence from evaluation forms is used or if additional evaluations are solicited, what kinds of opinions are expected? What does a department consider most important: qualitative evaluations, quantitative evaluations, letters solicited from former students, peer evaluations? (4) What are the standards for research? How does a department weigh peer-reviewed research or creative work and non-peer-reviewed research or creative work? Is there an expectation of engaged scholarship? Departments should discuss the definition of engaged scholarship, its relationship to "traditional" scholarship, and its relevance in each discipline. What standards are used to evaluate interdisciplinary and collaborative activities, inside and outside UNH, and how are such activities weighted relative to other kinds of research? If faculty have less than a normal teaching load, is more scholarship expected? Are faculty expected to obtain external funding to support research? (5) What standards are used for the promotion of research and clinical faculty? This should include not only standards for research or clinical practice but, if the faculty member also teaches or directs undergraduates or graduate students, that activity should also be evaluated according to clear standards. (6) Because UNH has been hiring ever more non-tenure-track lecturers and now is promoting some within that kind of position, the committee feels it is important that standards be developed for that too.

The report discussed the progress made on these matters in each unit and included a 4/1/2013 response by Provost John Aber commenting on these issues and suggesting the need to continue to work on them. The ad-hoc committee’s report made several recommendations. Today a senator said that student evaluations seem to have become a primary tool for evaluation of teaching, although in the past faculty were told that this would never happen. The ad-hoc committee chair said that the university should evaluate whether the students are able to retain and use the course information later in life. A senator asked if a department might choose to give more weight to student letters rather than student responses on the evaluation form, and the ad-hoc committee chair said that this could be possible if an exception were made by the dean. Another professor expressed concern that the dean and the provost may have unwritten standards which differ from those of the department. The professor said that there should be only one standard at all levels for each department and that the standard should be clear and transparent. The ad-hoc committee chair asked if, regarding the research component, it is sufficient for
promotion for a faculty member to bring in a paying grant or is it also necessary to complete the research required in the grant. Also, a senator said that some senior faculty are concerned that three research faculty were promoted a few years ago without the participation of the usual college promotion and tenure committee, and he added that evaluation by the new schools may be too insular. If a research faculty teaches, that should be part of the promotion process and have clearly articulated standards.

Jim Connell moved and Art Greenberg seconded a motion to continue the ad-hoc Promotion and Tenure Standards Oversight Committee into the next academic year and to specify that members who cannot continue should be replaced by appointment by the Faculty Senate’s Agenda Committee. After discussion, the mover and seconder accepted a friendly amendment to include in their motion the ad-hoc committee’s recommendations, which are the following.

The ad-hoc committee recommends that the Faculty Senate continue the charge of the ad-hoc committee into the next academic year; and this year's committee suggests that the senate should reconstitute the committee quickly, asking current members to continue and taking steps to appoint new members to replace those who cannot continue. The ad-hoc committee urges the senators to step forward and encourage their departments and units which have not yet acted, to discuss the issues and make necessary adjustments in their standards. These departments and units should aim to schedule the discussions early next fall. The senate leadership should also urge college and unit administrators to work with the committee both to produce their own responses and also to encourage departments to do so.

The amended motion passed with all ayes except for two nays.

VII. Academic Affairs Committee’s motions on the status of lecturers – The chair of the senate’s Academic Affairs Committee presented the committee’s Report on the Status of Lecturers at UNH. The full report has been sent to the senators on email and will be modified to make some non-substantive minor changes. This report is concerned with the full-time non-tenurable staff at UNH, regarding both the situation of lecturers and the effect their growing numbers may have on tenure-track faculty and on students. Lecturers typically teach a 3-3 load, as opposed to the 2-2 load that is the norm for tenure-track faculty in most departments; and lecturers are not expected to do scholarship or research. Only a few lecturers do more than the minimum of service, such as advising majors. In COLSA, a “unit of substantial advising” may substitute for a course. The conditions for lecturers vary across the colleges. In COLA, lecturers are offered a sequence of contracts, for one year, then three years, then five years; in some colleges lecturers may be promoted to “senior lecturer” or “Murkland lecturer” (in COLA), with an increase in salary, but their salaries remain well below that of the tenure-track professors.

The number of lecturers at UNH rose dramatically between 2010 and 2011, from 134 to 170, and in 2013 is up to 191. These are the numbers of actual people; the FTE number of lecturers this year is 164.7. Most lecturers are at 7/8 time or 88%, but a few are at 75%. This year there are 609 tenure-track faculty, down from 663 in 2005. Using 2005 as a base year (100%), the last
year for which we have statistics, the number of lecturers rose to 143% in 2012 and to 156% this year, while the number of tenure-track faculty has declined to 92%. Much of the growth of lecturer positions is in COLA, where about half the vacancies that were recently filled with new assistant professors are now being filled with lecturers. Lecturers are now 27% of the FTE tenure-track faculty including librarians and were less than 16% in 2005. Lecturers are 24% counting actual people and teach about 36% of the courses that are taught.

Lecturers are a diverse group. Some lack a Ph.D. or other “terminal” degree (such as an MFA) that the tenure-track faculty have, while other lecturers have the terminal degree. However, their sheer numbers, particularly of those who in all other respects resemble assistant professors, raise serious concerns about the consequences of a two-caste system of full-time teachers. Lecturers lack tenure. Without it, lecturers feel more reluctant to do anything controversial, such as opposing a policy of the administration or even of their own chair, than a tenured colleague does. The committee does not impute contempt for tenure to the UNH administration; its motive for rapidly increasing the number of lecturers is certainly the desire to save money. It costs the university about $6000 to have a lecturer teach a course and about $15,000 to have an assistant professor do so, not counting benefits.

The committee has serious concerns over the creation of “e-lecturers” by the deans of some colleges. E-lecturers are lecturers whose only duties would be to teach three on-line courses each term or a certain number each year (including J-term and summer courses). When a department asks for another tenure-track hire, the department is sometimes told that it can have only a lecturer and sometimes only an “e-lecturer”. The position is held out as an inducement to a department to offer more e-courses. Then enough e-courses have to be found for such a lecturer in order to justify his or her salary, possibly more e-courses than the department considers educationally sound and sometimes entailing the withdrawal of an e-course or two from tenure-track faculty who are already teaching them.

Lecturers lack a union. They have recently formed a Lecturers Council, but it has as yet no recognized standing in the governance of the university. Many lecturers are worried about grievance procedures. Also, many lecturers continue from year to year on a merely oral understanding with their chair. The committee thinks a minimum of job security would require that they receive a letter from the chair at least a full semester in advance.

As the number of tenure-track faculty falls but the number of students and the variety of majors, minors, and degree programs rises, the burden of service on the tenure-track faculty grows heavier. The effect on scholarship/research and advising is similar. This burden is compounded by the fact that most lecturers lack the time, experience, gravitas, or personal investment in the institution to take responsibility for a program or major project; and in some colleges the lecturers have been told that their only duty is teaching, with some advising of majors. However, some lecturers have shown that they are excellent at major service tasks and have earned the respect of all members of their departments. These lecturers have said they would like to continue to do this work, for which in some cases they have received a course release, but have been told they may not. Policies vary among the colleges at UNH.
In departments with large graduate programs, lecturers are usually not allowed to teach graduate students. Some of the lecturers are fully competent to do so, having published articles or even books; but because research is not part of their mandate it seems inappropriate to make them members of the graduate faculty. Yet if they are excluded from teaching graduate courses, as well as reading theses and dissertations, then the shrinking cohort of professors must sustain the graduate programs alone. The committee believes that departments have the right to alter such arrangements and may invite those lecturers, whom they deem capable of doing so, to teach graduate courses. The deans and the Graduate School should not rule out such appointments where there is a manifest need.

The committee believes that it is unhealthy to have a large staff of lecturers whose terms of employment, salary levels, distribution of duties, and lack of a union place the lecturers in a very different category from the professors, despite efforts in some departments to integrate lecturers in some respects. We agree with a 2010 AAUP report, “Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Appointments”, which states that the best practice for institutions of all types is to convert the status of contingent appointments to appointments eligible for tenure with only minor changes in job description. Quite a few colleges and universities have recently undertaken such conversions successfully. We understand that the hiring of a tenure-track professor usually involves a nationwide search; but many lecturers have been hired as a result of a nationwide search already; and they would be eligible for conversion. For some others, who have served many years as lecturers and have proven their worthiness, it may be appropriate to waive the nationwide search.

The report includes the following motions. (1) We call on the administration to make it a top priority to halt the substitution of lecturers for departing professors. The practice should now be the other way round. When lecturers resign, tenure-track professors should be hired, with some exceptions where appropriate, to replace them. (This motion is in accord with the first recommendation of the Professional Standards Committee: “The default for replacing all tenure-track faculty when a vacancy occurs will be the selection of another tenure-track faculty member. Deviations from this default position should be accompanied by an explanation to the impacted department/division and the chance for the chair to respond. This applies to single hires and cluster hires.”) (2) We call on the administration to start converting some existing lecture lines into tenure-track lines according to the AAUP best practices described above. (3) We welcome the steps taken by COLA to increase lecturers’ salaries annually and to establish a practice by which lecturers will be offered contracts for increasing lengths of time. Though some flexibility may be necessary, we ask that these steps serve as the model for all the colleges. (4) Lecturers should receive a letter regarding future employment at least a full semester before that employment begins. (5) We call on the deans of all colleges, where a clear need is demonstrated, to allow departments to substitute a substantial service duty, such as overseeing a program, for a course. (6) We call on the administration to enhance the research opportunities for lecturers, if they wish to undertake this, by allowing, for example, an occasional course release to give time for a research project, funds to defray travel expenses to conferences, and summer grants to free lecturers from the pressure to teach on-line courses to make ends meet. (7) Departments should feel free, under certain circumstances, to ask a lecturer to teach a graduate course and/or read theses and dissertations and/or serve on examination committees. Such circumstances would include the proper training and competence of the lecturer, of course, but also the assurance that he or she would not be unduly burdened. (8) We move that the Faculty Senate immediately
invite the Lecturers’ Council to send one or two representatives to senate meetings, with the right to speak on any subject.  (9) We move that the Faculty Senate, either through the Agenda Committee or an ad hoc committee, investigate the possibility of integrating lecturers more thoroughly into the senate, perhaps by conferring the right to vote on a certain number of them, or allowing departments to send them as their representatives, or the like.

Today the AAC chair said that motion 7 should include the phrase: “with the concurrence of the Graduate School”. In response to a question, the senate chair said that the senate constitution currently states that faculty senators must be tenure-track faculty. The AAC chair said that there may be some relatively recent rules on the length of time a lecture may continue to work at UNH as a lecturer, and the committee believes that the lecturers should be allowed to continue if the department wishes. A senator from the Paul College said that the AAC report says little about that college and that, before a vote occurs, the committee should systematically gather information from a wide variety of departments. The AAC chair replied that enough information has been received, even though it may not have been specifically cited in the report. A professor said that he thinks that, although some lecturers should be permitted to teach graduate courses, the Graduate Council should be able to review this. In addition, since lecturers can be easily dismissed and since evaluation may be strongly based on question fourteen of the student evaluation of courses, lecturers may be overly influenced to provide “customer satisfaction” to students, rather than a rigorous educational experience.

Senators said that it is not right to expect lecturers to take on the additional duties of tenure-track faculty without being paid for that additional work. The AAC chair said that the Lecturers’ Council liked the nine motions. A professor asked if motion 4, which states that lecturers “should receive a letter regarding future employment at least a full semester before that employment begins”, means a letter by the beginning of the spring term for a course in the next fall term; and the AAC chair replied in the affirmative. The professor responded that departments often do not know how many courses or sections of courses will be offered, until around April, since budget meetings occur in late March. The AAC chair replied that perhaps motion 4 could be changed to say “six months before that employment begins.” Another senator said that a lecturer’s rehiring may be predicated on the teaching performance in the semester before; and that is not known until the end of the semester. This is especially important during a two or three year trial period. Mention was made of an amendment which the Agenda Committee may propose for the motions 5 through 9. Today Jim Connell proposed a procedural amendment, which was accepted as a friendly amendment, that the Faculty Senate thanks the Academic Affairs Committee for its hard work and will further consider the report and its recommendations at the next senate meeting. The senate passed this amendment with all ayes except for one nay.

VIII. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned.