

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)**Thursday, October 6, 2022****1:00 – 2:30 pm****Minutes of Meeting**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom met at 1:00 pm on October 6, 2022, via Zoom. Chair David Jennings presiding.

I. Campus Review Items – Chair Jennings**A. Proposal to Create a B.S. Degree in Biochemical and Biomolecular Engineering**

- The proposal documents and Undergraduate Council's Policy for the Review and Approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs were linked on today's agenda.

FWAF members agreed that this proposal is outside the committee's purview.

Action: The Senate Chair will be informed that FWAF declines to opine.

B. Proposal to Create a B.S. Degree in Chemical Engineering

- The proposal documents and Undergraduate Council's Policy for the Review and Approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs were linked on today's agenda.

FWAF members agreed that this proposal is outside the committee's purview.

Action: The Senate Chair will be informed that FWAF declines to opine.

II. Chair's Report – Chair Jennings**A. September 20 and October 4 Divisional Council Meetings**

- Discussion of the Divisional Council Conflicts of Interest policy
- The need to provide funds to departments to cover faculty leaves and course releases
- The administration wants to reexamine the campus policy and procedures for the establishment of new Schools.
- Discussion of the Senate portion of the MacKenzie Scott gift to the campus. The Senate's spending plan, which was approved by Divisional Council in the last academic year, includes funds for faculty and student professional development, undergraduate student research scholarships, graduate student travel grants, and faculty research grants. The CoR chair suggested that each relevant committee formulate its own plan for allocating the funds under its purview. For example, FWAF is asked to create a process by which to allocate funds for faculty professional development.

Action: This discussion will be placed on the FWAF November 3 agenda.

- EVC/Provost spoke with Divisional Council about course delivery during the recent heat wave and other potential situations. FWAF Chair Jennings asked about the campus's willingness and ability to accommodate faculty with health issues. These accommodations need to be widely advertised by the campus. FWAF Chair Jennings pointed out that while courses have a certain percentage for online modality, this percentage is not to be used in a

discretionary manner; the online modality should be used for pedagogically sound purposes and indicated on the CRF. The EVC/Provost was concerned about inequitable learning opportunities for students if individual faculty decide to change their courses to remote delivery with no notice. When the campus shifted to online instruction during the pandemic, the campus had to provide MiFi devices to students to ensure they had connectivity. Some students did not have a safe or quiet place to work and study.

- Public Service Loan Forgiveness. AFAC Chair Eaton informed Divisional Council that a draft email will soon be issued from UCOP to employees to announce that in response to requests, the US Department of Education recently clarified that they will accept applications submitted after the October 31, 2022 waiver deadline if employees complete the PSLF Help Tool before October 31. AFAC Chair Eaton then gave a brief presentation on institutional debt.

III. **UCAF Updates** – *Justin Yeakel*

FWAF member Yeakel reported that much of the meeting focused on the second systemwide review of the draft Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct in the Workplace. FWAF opined on this policy and previously transmitted a memo to the Senate Chair on September 30.

Independent of UCAF, FWAF member Yeakel raised an issue with FWAF. School of Natural Sciences faculty – both Senate and non-Senate – are stretched to the breaking point in trying to teach all their courses. Some courses have had to be cancelled. FWAF Chair Jennings inquired how FWAF can assist in this issue. Member Yeakel replied that Natural Sciences department chairs are preparing a memo to UGC and GC.

IV. **Consent Calendar** – *Chair Jennings*

- A. Agenda
- B. Draft September 8 meeting minutes

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented with minor edits requested by Chair Jennings to the draft September 8 meeting minutes.

V. **Consultation with AVPF Anna Song**

- A. Committee introductions
- B. FWAF's comments on the Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct in the Workplace. (Memo was transmitted to the Senate Chair on September 30).

AVPF Song reported that the EVC/Provost is concerned by the low morale of faculty, students, and staff and that grievances and complaints are at an all-time high. She added that even though she is in an interim role, she will do all she can to remedy the situation. She and FWAF members held a brief discussion on the Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct in the Workplace. FWAF is concerned that too many things are falling under the administration's purview which is problematic given that the administration has different norms than faculty. The evaluators should be faculty peers. AVPF Song

responded that faculty members are appointed to investigative teams in order to ensure that faculty norms are understood. She directed FWAF members to the website for the campus Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) <https://ophd.ucmerced.edu/> She stated that department chairs, deans, and associate deans should apprise the faculty of OPHD's resources so that they might use them if need arises. OPHD has trained investigators and individuals who are knowledgeable about Title IX issues, sexual violence and sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, and harassment. Ideally, department chairs and deans would be empowered to address grievances before they escalate. AVPF Song added that she is advocating for the campus to obtain a specially-made, secure software that tracks previous grievance cases.

VI. Systemwide Review Item – Chair Jennings

A. Presidential Policy on Vaccination Programs

- The policy documents and the explanatory cover letter with a list of key revisions were linked on today's agenda.
- Background: This policy is renamed "Policy on Vaccination Programs" and primarily consolidates the University's existing systemwide vaccination requirements other than the Student Immunization Policy into a single document.

Chair Jennings would like FWAF to review and provide comments.

Action: Chair Jennings will email FWAF to request a lead reviewer. The lead reviewer's comments need to be submitted to the committee analyst by October 25. FWAF's comments, if any, are due to the Senate Chair by Tuesday, November 1.

VII. Executive Session

Voting members only. No minutes taken.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Attest: David Jennings, FWAF Chair