

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)****Wednesday, February 23, 2022****10:00 – 11:30 am****Minutes of Meeting**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom met at 10:00 am on February 23, 2022, via Zoom. Chair David Jennings presiding.

I. Chair's Report – *David Jennings*

A. Divisional Council meetings January 27 and February 10

The discussion at Divisional Council that is relevant to FWAF related to UCAF's recommendations on departmental statements on political, religious, or commercial issues. The discussion at recent Divisional Council meetings revealed that, in addition to FWAF, other Senate committees had concerns about UCAF's recommendations. The complete set of Senate committee comments will be transmitted to the systemwide Senate Chair.

**Action:** at the next FWAF meeting, Chair Jennings will update FWAF members on Divisional Council's discussions on research obstacles.

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft January 26 meeting minutes

**Action:** the Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. PROC updates – *Tea Lempiälä*

A. February 3 PROC meeting

FWAF Vice Chair Lempiälä reported a potentially contentious discussion of the review of the Merritt Writing Program. She will keep FWAF members informed as needed.

IV. UCFW Updates – *Jayson Beaster-Jones*

A. Updates from February 11 UCFW meeting

- i. Discussion of public service loan forgiveness and the push for individuals to submit their applications as soon as possible.
- ii. The retirement task force discussed a COLA increase given the increase in the inflation rate. There was also a discussion on offering retirement counselors at the

systemwide level to guide UC employees and answer their questions about benefits as employees get closer to retirement.

- iii. The health care task force reported that some UC employees are dismayed to discover that the UC pharmacy benefits are insufficient compared with some non-UC pharmacy benefit plans.
- iv. UCFW wrote a memo to Academic Council regarding providing fertility benefits and this memo will be discussed by Council.
- v. The Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) principle is being approached in different ways by the UC campuses. The systemwide Senate Chair asserted that the UC should take the opportunity to plan for future crises in the context of faculty welfare issues. UCFW will take the lead in proposing revisions to the APM, recognizing that this will be a multi-year process requiring a full systemwide review. The sentiment is that the criteria for advancement and promotion in the APM were written in a different era and do not reflect the current UC workforce.
- vi. Discussion of the issue of recording faculty lectures. The issue is likely a non-starter for various reasons.
- vii. Discussion on broad questions of the cost of living, the cost of child care, and remote work. The discussion will continue this academic year and into the next.

V. Additional Messaging on Impacts of Pandemic – *David Jennings*

FWAF Chair Jennings prepared talking points which were linked on today's agenda about the main concern conveyed to him and other FWAF members in their office hours with faculty members and visits to department meetings: how the pandemic will affect faculty's advancements and promotions, specifically, requests to stop the clock and getting their research back on track. Prior to this meeting, FWAF Chair Jennings also asked FWAF members to review the FAQ document recently drafted by CAP and APO and distributed to Divisional Council, School Executive Committee chairs, and School AP staff.

Chair Jennings stated that CAP's FAQ essentially provided links to already existing information on the APO and UCOP websites but offered no further information. He received feedback from a few department chairs who expected more guidance for review committees on preparing cases and for faculty members going up for review who are trying to articulate the impact of the pandemic on their research. FWAF members acknowledged that norms for advancement and promotion vary across disciplines and departments. Chair Jennings suggested that he could speak with more department chairs across campus to gather their input.

FWAF members also pointed out that some faculty members are reluctant to articulate personal challenges, such as the mental health impact of the pandemic, in their self-statements. It would be helpful if review committees could be made aware of faculty members' personal challenges without requiring faculty to provide these details in their case materials. A FWAF member added that even if faculty members include such

details in their materials, the review committee and department chairs do not always acknowledge them in their own analyses. Some faculty are also concerned by the lack of guidance on when or if they should request a leave of absence and how to determine if their mental health issues reach the threshold of a leave.

FWAF members expressed concern about the outdated UC standards for advancement and promotion that do not allow for culture change. Moreover, it would be helpful if UCOP would improve its communication on existing information and guidance about pandemic impacts on faculty research. Currently, the information is dispersed across various locations.

Chair Jennings summarized FWAF's above discussion as follows: 1) FWAF believes that systemwide information and guidance on the impacts of the pandemic on faculty advancement and promotion should be more widely shared; 2) faculty need guidance on how to articulate their personal challenges in their self-statements and if they choose not to include such information, then review committees and department chairs should be made aware of the challenges through a different mechanism; and 3) the FWAF chair should elicit input from department chairs on what information they need to better advise review committees and faculty under review.

**Action:** the FWAF chair will consult with the Senate Chair and Senate Vice Chair on the possibility of his attending department chair meetings to elicit input from chairs on information they need to advise review committees and their faculty on advancement and promotion.

#### VI. FWAF Awards Subcommittee

The Call for Nominations for the annual Senate awards was issued to faculty in mid-February. FWAF is responsible for reviewing nominations for the award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship and selecting a winner. Nominations are due to the Senate Chair by Monday, March 14. FWAF must select a winner by early April (date TBD). Winners of all Senate awards will be announced at the Spring Meeting of the Division (date TBD).

Chair Jennings requested that the subcommittee be formed after the March 14 submission deadline.

**Action:** the committee analyst will contact FWAF members after the March 14 nomination submission deadline to assemble the awards subcommittee. The analyst will provide the TBD subcommittee members with the nomination packages.

#### VII. FWAF Subcommittee on Family-Friendly Policies – *Tea Lempiälä*

The subcommittee's draft action plan was linked on today's agenda for FWAF's review. FWAF Vice Chair Lempiälä summarized the elements of the action plan. The plan articulates issues to be addressed including sufficient care options for family members of all ages (accentuated

need for small children), COVID-related concerns including barriers to productivity, and implications for advancement and tenure. The draft action plan also suggests actions to be taken including: mapping out care availability in Merced plus faculty issues/concerns related to it, researching the offerings of Bright Horizons, administering a faculty survey, advocating for the formation of a family-friendly policy committee, and advocating for equitable communication towards faculty about their options.

FWAF members suggested adding one point under the main issue of sufficient care options for family members of all ages: the misalignment of local K-12 school vacation schedules with that of UC Merced's.

FWAF members then discussed how best to engage with the administration on these issues. It was suggested that the FWAF chair would raise the issues with the Senate Chair, as the Senate Chair holds standing meetings with the Chancellor and EVC/Provost. FWAF members agreed that the subcommittee's action plan should be finalized before the FWAF chair speaks with the Senate Chair and Divisional Council.

FWAF members emphasized the need to include stakeholders from across the campus community on the potential committee on family friendly policies. A FWAF member suggested that the new campus Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) could empanel and manage this committee in an effort to streamline all campus equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice efforts. AVPF Valdez stated that she can explore this possibility and report back to FWAF at the next meeting.

**Action:** AVPF Valdez will report at the next FWAF meeting on the possibility of engaging the new CDO on creating and managing a potential campus committee on family friendly policies that should include stakeholders from across the campus community. At the next FWAF meeting, Vice Chair Lempiälä will report on the FWAF family friendly subcommittee's progress in finalizing the action plan.

#### VIII. Consultation with Associate VPF – *Zulema Valdez*

##### A. SEA Change

UCOP is awarding \$200,000 to each UC campus in order to scale up faculty professional development, improve faculty cultural competency for teaching and learning, and to support UC's participation in the SEA Change (STEMM Equity Achievement) program. The award of these funds is in recognition of each campus commitment to participate in SEA Change. Additional information can be found by accessing the link on today's agenda.

AVPF Valdez informed FWAF members that UCOP has embraced the SEA Change program. SEA Change helps the campuses synthesize and streamline their relevant activities and provide guidance on improving them. She reminded FWAF members of the previously-discussed plan of appointing Associate Deans for EDI in each School; she speculated that those individuals would be tasked with collating each School's efforts so that UC Merced's reporting to UCOP is streamlined.

B. Updates on search for campus Ombuds and campus Chief Diversity Officer.

A new CDO has been identified and a campus announcement is forthcoming. Given that the EDI division on campus is being built up, the new CDO should be engaged in formulating a campus committee on family friendly policies.

A campus announcement is also forthcoming on the newly-identified Ombuds.

IX. Systemwide Review Item – *David Jennings*

A. Presidential Policy on University of California Research Data

This is the second systemwide review for this policy. Today's agenda included links to the revised policy in redline and clean formats, an FAQ, FWAF's comments from AY 20-21, and all UC campus comments on the first version of the policy (including Merced's).

**Action:** FWAF Chair Jennings will send his comments on the revised policy to FWAF members for an email discussion. A draft memo will be added to the March 30 FWAF meeting agenda for the committee's review and approval. FWAF's comments are due to the Senate Chair by 5:00 pm on March 30.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

Attest: David Jennings, FWAF Chair