

End-of-Year Report

Faculty Affairs Committee of the UAF Faculty Senate

May 2013

The faculty affairs committee dealt with three large issues and two smaller ones during the 2012/13 academic year.

Main Issues:

1. Blue Book revision

The Faculty Affairs Committee and the Unit Criteria Committee were tasked with revising the Blue Book which consists of two documents: the UAF Faculty Appointment and Evaluation Policies and the UAF Regulations for the Appointment and Evaluation of Faculty. The documents hadn't been revised for many years and were out of date with the collective bargaining contracts and Board of Regents policies. A group of faculty and members of the Provost's staff had already worked on the documents to identify areas that needed to be revised. In addition, the provost presented the two committees tasked to work on it with her own comments, suggestions, and concerns. The goal was to produce one updated and integrated document. The requested timeline for the project was AY 2012-13.

In the fall, the two committees met with the Provost to clarify the task and discuss the Provost's concerns. The committee then divided the revisions to make work on the document more efficient. The Faculty Affairs Committee revised chapters on faculty appointments, termination, and sabbaticals; the Unit Criteria Committee worked on the chapter on faculty evaluations. The chairs of the committees (Cécile Lardon and Karen Jensen) collaborated and coordinated with each other to ensure consistency. The committee chairs also met with UNAC and UAFT representatives to discuss sections relevant to the CBA's.

At the end of AY 2012-13 a draft of a revised Blue Book has been produced and given to the Provost and union leaders for review, but some work on it remains. The main changes made to the Blue Book so far include:

- a. Merged the Policies and Regulations documents into one
- b. Clarified some language and definitions
- c. Updated information to be consistent with the CBAs and BOR policies and regulations
- d. Updated information based on what recent practice has been.

However, several major topics were not addressed in this revision of the Blue Book. Some of them will be handled separately and then included in the Blue Book at a later date:

- a. Changes in policies and regulations having to do with joint appointments – the Senate is appointing and ad hoc committee to deal with this issue during the fall 2013 semester.

- b. Changes in policies and regulations on promotion for term-funded instructional faculty. Although everyone agreed that term-funded instructional faculty should be eligible for promotion there currently is no process for them to do that. A change in policy on this issue will need to involve the CBAs, the Faculty Senate, the Provost, and the Chancellor. Potentially, the Board of Regents would need to be involved as well. The Faculty Senate President coordinated a meeting with senate leaders, the Provost, and faculty interested in this issue. A faculty working group has formed to work on this and, eventually, submit a motion to the Faculty Senate.

The two committees working on the revision of the Blue Book recommend that the Unit Criteria Committee make annual updates to the document.

2. Teaching by non-regular faculty at UAF

Several years ago the Faculty Affairs Committee was charged with examining the amount of teaching conducted by contingent or non-regular faculty at UAF. The committee assembled a data set containing information about every course section taught at UAF during AY 2007-8 and 2011-12. The committee was interested in the percentage and number of course sections that were taught by non-regular faculty – defined as faculty who are not tenured or on the tenure track and who are not research faculty. An analysis of the data indicates that the use of non-regular faculty to teach courses varies greatly across academic units. The committee recommends ongoing data analysis and tracking of the use of non-regular teaching faculty at UAF.

3. Faculty earning certificates and degrees in the departments and programs they teach in

See attached report.

Other Issues:

1. Clarification of Grade Appeals Policy

A motion to clarify the time within which the university has to respond to students' grade appeals was introduced and passed. This policy clarification was needed to address grade appeals submitted during the summer.

2. Election Policy for Faculty Senate Alternates

A motion allowing units to elect an alternate outside of the election cycle if the elected senator resigns and not alternate is available to serve out the term was introduced and passed. The motion also specified when faculty senate elections are to be held (i.e., during the spring semester).

Issues and Policies Related to Faculty Earning Certificates and Degrees in the Departments/Programs they Work in

Faculty Affairs Committee of the UAF Faculty Senate

April 2013

The Faculty Affairs Committee was tasked with exploring the issues and UAF policies related to faculty earning certificates and degrees in the departments they work in. The only existing policy prohibits faculty from earning a graduate degree in the department of their employment. Specifically, the catalog states that *UAF tenured faculty, tenure track faculty and research faculty are not eligible to become candidates for a graduate degree within the discipline in which they teach at UAF* (p. 207). The committee decided to gain a better understanding of the issue by talking to faculty and administrators who likely had experience with it. Several interviews with people from a variety of colleges/schools and programs provided much needed input.

Although the committee's task of making policy recommendations related to this issue was triggered by a scenario involving an AA degree and a certificate, problems can occur at all levels from a certificate to a Ph.D. There are a variety of reasons for why faculty earning certificates or degrees in the units they teach in can be problematic; and there will need to be a variety of solutions to address them.

The committee identified four factors that contribute to and define the issue:

1. The level of certificate or degree earned: This simply means whether the degree earned is an AA, BA, or PhD – or a certificate. This is important because the type of involvement with colleagues and peers is quite different across the levels of degrees. For example, earning a B.A. usually involves completing a number of courses but not a close relationship with a faculty mentor and the scrutiny of a piece of original research by a faculty committee.
2. The reasons for why departments and programs allow their faculty to earn degrees in their own units: From our conversations we identified four basic reasons for this practice.
 - a. For UAF employees it is cheaper and more convenient to earn a degree or certificate locally than to go somewhere else. For people who are geographically tied to Fairbanks the only other option would be an online program.
 - b. Due to the geographic isolation of Fairbanks, the small labor pool, and the Alaska-specific nature of some programs it is seen as necessary to “grow one's own” faculty in order to deliver the curriculum.
 - c. Somewhat related to b. is that for programs very specific to Alaska there may not be qualified faculty from other universities.
 - d. Interdisciplinary degrees are not seen as being part of a program or department, even if they are administered by and tailored to a specific academic unit. Similarly, a student could design an interdisciplinary degree with course work and a committee primarily from the department he or she teaches in.

3. The problems associated with faculty earning certificates and degrees in their own units: The committee identified four main types of problems associated with faculty earning certificates or degrees in their own units.
 - a. In appropriate access to program info, decision making, resources
 - b. Conflict of interest, nepotism, power relationships
 - c. Lack of quality control – both perceived and real
 - d. Lack of opportunity associated with the influence of outside resources – studying somewhere else can provide a fresh perspective and new ideas to the program/department
4. Who is earning certificates and degrees in their own units: This refers to the type of position a faculty member holds while earning a certificate or degree. The potential implications of this practice are quite different for a part-time adjunct instructor than they are for a tenure-track faculty member.

When talking to our informants it became quite clear that there is likely not going to be one solution that fits all possible combinations of these factors. There is a clear difference between someone teaching introductory courses in a highly Alaska-specific program on a part-time basis while earning a graduate degree and a full-time faculty member earning a Ph.D. while also chairing M.A. committees in the same program, or a faculty serving in a leadership role in a program while also earning a degree in it. While few people would argue with the inappropriateness of the latter, there is likely to be some disagreement about the former. Therefore, solutions and policies will need to find an appropriate balance between defining lines that cannot be crossed and putting in place safeguards that minimize the potential problems associated with earning a degree or certificate in one's own unit. In many cases we will likely still need to rely on the good judgment of our colleagues and leaders to avoid most scenarios that can put the faculty earning the degree or the program at risk.

We list some of the ideas presented to us below but point out that none of these suggestions have been scrutinized or discussed with a wider audience at UAF. They should not be seen as policy solutions suggested by the FAC but rather as a starting point for further information gathering and discussion. Some suggestions were:

- Include more committee members from outside the unit than would normally be the case.
- Provide a leave of absence and/or financial incentives to faculty willing to earn degrees elsewhere.
- Establish a consortium of colleges and universities where staff can take courses and earn degrees interchangeably. The tuition waiver for UAF would apply to, let's say, a tribal college offering a certificate in tribal management.
- Develop both policy and a set of guidelines for issues like spouses in class, etc.
- Add a statement about earning certificates and degrees in one's own program to conflict of interest form.
- Develop guidelines for department chairs.
- Develop a specific process and guidelines for earning certificates and degrees in one's own department. Examples may include:

- A committee of outsiders who review an M.A. thesis or dissertation.
- For an M.A. committee the student selects one member, the Dean selects one, and the faculty select one.
- Develop specific guidelines for students earning interdisciplinary degrees – they may not be officially associated with a department or program but may involve the faculty from the program the student is teaching in.
- Develop policies and guidelines on three levels:
 - Individual conduct
 - Rules and support for departments and programs
 - University infrastructure (e.g., tuition waivers for other universities to earn degrees needed at UAF)

Situations that should always be avoided:

- Faculty or staff in leadership positions earning certificates or degrees in the units they lead.
- Faculty earning certificates or degrees in programs where they supervise other students.
- Faculty participating in program/department decision-making (e.g., decisions about courses/curriculum, student admissions, program standards, and staffing) while earning a certificate or degree