

Washington University in St. Louis
Faculty Senate
December 2, 2008

4:31 Call to order

1. Introductions
2. The minutes of the Faculty Senate meeting of April 23, 2008 were approved
3. Chancellor's Report

Construction

The Danforth Campus is home to three new buildings:

The Danforth University Center has become a crossroads of activity, even before the formal dedication to be held April 17, 2009 during the weekend of the Thurtene Carnival and the new alumni reunion. Seigle Hall provides a new home to social science departments and allows for expansion of the law school.

The new residential hall Village East offers on-campus apartment living to undergraduates.

The ambitious – and somewhat disruptive – plans for renewal of the South Forty continue.

The construction of the BJC Institute of Health, the largest project on the medical school campus, is on schedule to be completed by the end of 2009.

Recruitment

This year's incoming undergraduate class is the most talented to date. Applications are up over last year's numbers, and the recruiting is going well. While the professional and graduate programs are more particularized, there has been progress over all.

Faculty recruitment is also going very well.

Vice Presidential Debate

Thanks in part to presidential nominee John McCain's choice of Sarah Palin as his running mate, the debate garnered more publicity for the university than any other event. The university welcomed 3100 credentialed members of the media; several national television programs were broadcast live from the campus. A record number of students were involved in the debate.

Initiatives

Today the university announced the formation of a new consortium for Clean Coal Utilization to be headed by the Department of Energy, Environmental and Chemical Engineering with local companies Peabody Energy, Arch Coal, and Ameren.

Led by Rick Wilson and Tim Ley, a large research team completed the first mapping of the entire genome sequence of a cancer cell.

The Economy

While we face a serious set of financial challenges, the university is still in a relatively strong position. Being able to continue to meet the now growing financial aid needs of our students is a primary concern, although our resources are not unlimited.

Each revenue stream is constrained:

Tuition cannot be increased enough to provide the extra revenue.

Endowment income is down. Laws restricting use of endowment income further exacerbate the availability of funds.

Philanthropy covers approximately ten percent of the university's total operating revenue. While donations as of November 08 are ahead of November 07, it is unlikely to continue.

Research revenue is not increasing. The budget of the NIH – a major source of research grants – is flat, and funding continues at the 90% level.

Clinical revenue is better than last year, and better than expected. However, if unemployment continues to increase, fewer people will have medical insurance, and clinic income will be affected.

Investment income on reserves, tied to the 90-day treasury rate, is much lower than expected.

The university is making every effort to contain and limit expenses even within this calendar year to build resources for financial aid and other needs. Deans and Vice Chancellors have agreed to forego raises for the next fiscal year. Compensation increases will be constrained; however, it is understood that the university will not be able to maintain quality over the years without raising faculty salaries. The university is still wealthy, and still positioned to respond to exciting opportunities, whether matching financial awards or recruiting the very talented. While there will be no freezes on compensation or hiring, we will need to proceed with caution. Seeking to thrive in a period of adversity we need to avoid actions that might compromise future success.

3. Professor of Practice – Andy Sobel, Faculty Senate Chair

The Senate Council began discussions on the proposal to amend the Policy on Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure last February. In consultation with representatives of the campus chapter of the AAUP (John Drobak, Ed Greenberg and Michael Friedlander) the original language was changed to add protections for faculty in the Professor of Practice track. Language was also introduced regarding faculty involvement in the process within each school.

There is great variance among the schools regarding both stage of implementation and definition of the track. The definition for the School of Arts and Sciences was especially problematic.

In October the Senate Council invited several deans to a discussion of the proposal. At the end of the meeting the Senate Council voted unanimously to bring the proposal to the full Faculty Senate.

After the minutes are disseminated there will be an electronic vote announced through e-mail and on the Senate Council website. Anyone in opposition may compose a statement to be posted with the proposal. If the proposal passes, it will still be subject to the approval by the Board of Trustees.

Andy Sobel moved to propose the change to the tenure document. It was seconded, and discussion followed.

The chancellor noted that the clinical track at the School of Medicine has been very successful.

An amendment was proposed to remove the phrase “and teachers” from III C 1 (on page 5 of the “final draft”) of the Policy on Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure with the proposed amendments.

Discussion on the amendment:

Explanation: The professor of practice is someone who practices a profession: an architect, playwright, lawyer, etc. The profession of math includes proving theorems and so forth - that is, doing research. Just teaching does not constitute practicing the profession. For that there could be a teaching professorship. The proposal is shoehorning two distinctly different ideas into one track: long term lecturer and distinguished practitioner.

Responses: Different schools have different perspectives. It is easier for other schools to define professor of practice. There are approximately three hundred lecturers in Arts and Sciences. One school should not be able to dictate to another. The present language does and should allow flexibility.

The School of Arts and Sciences is currently proposing that the track exist only at the full professor level. That does not preclude conferring the title on a lecturer who excels but is not a researcher. It allows the maximum flexibility and could also help with the issue of spousal hires. A teaching position does not preclude research or making a great contribution to the university.

There is no conflict between practitioners and teachers because an architect would be hired to teach, not design.

Question: If the length of the appointment is the justification, what is the limitation of the appointment?

Response: Each school sets its own terms and criteria for appointment to the position. In no case is the term parallel to the lifelong term of a tenured appointment.

It was remarked that the dean and most law school faculty would be opposed to the amendment. The law school plans to reserve the title "Senior Professor of Practice" for distinguished lawyers or judges, limiting the number of positions to two, and the term of each to two years, renewable once. The title "Professor of Practice" would be given to eligible teachers of legal writing, a critical skill of the practice.

History: The Professor of Practice discussion began in the School of Engineering as part of an effort to standardize nomenclature. The title was meant to be reserved for a few distinguished individuals who had significant experience in industry and were most likely nearing the end of their careers. They would mostly teach courses in design. There was a clear distinction between lecturers and professors of practice ("worlds apart"). The law school's approach represents a major shift. The School of Engineering currently has no intent to institute the track if approved.

For the amendment [Education]: The Department of Education would like the amendment. Most other comparable universities have separate schools of education. The education department envisions the proposed track for practitioners with many years of experience, whether as teacher, administrator, or director on a state board of education. To include the phrase "and teacher" could open up the title to a recent graduate with only a bachelor's degree and no experience.

Against the Amendment [Performing Arts Department]: Taking out the phrase could be seen as deleterious. The department has a number of practitioners who have more than a decade of experience whose teaching experience rivals - and goes hand and hand with - their professional experience.

Departments of languages and literatures welcome the position as important. A senior specialist in the teaching of language could be a valuable addition to the lecturers.

Rich Loomis, Chair of Faculty Council (Arts and Sciences) reported that in the discussions two distinct sides have emerged: those opposed to the title being used to reward outstanding or longstanding lecturers, and those in favor of such. Caps to the number of such positions have been discussed. Because the position does not come with tenure, how does one limit duration. The School of Arts and Sciences is continuing its discussions by requesting that each department present a proposal to the dean, including defining the professional duties of the position and duration of appointments. The major division appears to be whether to include lecturers on this track.

The question was called to a vote and the amendment was defeated.

Discussion of the original proposal continued.

The difficulties of allowing each school to set its own standards were raised. There will be pressure on other schools if one school promotes its lecturers to professors of practice. Other lecturers will feel disenfranchised.

Also, the current efforts to facilitate interscholastic collaboration will be made more difficult if each school has widely different standards and criteria.

Conflating professor of practice and lecturer is a “muddying of the waters.” Blurring the distinction between the two positions will raise sufficient opposition to the proposal.

There are differences among the schools and complications from asymmetries among them. It is not the charge of the Senate Council to come up with a uniform standard. Some centralization was created by adding language requiring each school to deposit a copy of its criteria and procedures in a central repository in the new office of the provost. There is the assumption that such a requirement will create pressure for convergence among policies.

It was asked if there are limits to the number or percentage of such positions?

The law school plans to limit the number of Senior Professors of Practice to two. Due to the concern that regular faculty could be replaced, the AAUP recommends that contingency (i.e. not tenure-line) faculty be limited to fifteen percent.

It was then asked if every school will be as diligent as the law school?

Already nearly half of the faculty is not tenureline (this number includes those on the clinical track at the School of Medicine.)

What, then, are the implications for a research university?

It was asserted that market constraints ensuring quality control would naturally limit the number of positions not on the tenure track.

Yet, it was observed, institutions have been known to take actions deleterious to their well-being.

It was suggested that there be further consideration of shared criteria for consistency. At the School of Medicine new hires can transfer between clinical and research tracks for up to five years.

The change to the tenure document is akin to authorizing legislation, not appropriation. That is, it will enable but not require each school to create a professor of practice track or position. Very different environments characterize each school. Even within the School of Arts and Sciences there are very different cultures. Implementation should be left to the individual schools.

There is even the possibility of designing the professor of practice to be more similar to the clinical track, and be a source of revenue (for example, schools could offer design, consultation, or legal services on a fee basis). The change to the tenure document could be used in different ways to add possibilities and enhance success.

Other academic institutions have similar positions.

The position is not meant to replace the lecturer track. The proposal empowers each school to implement the change as it sees fit. Faculty need to be involved in the guidelines of their respective schools.

A second amendment was proposed to add “the maximum number or percentage of such positions” to article III. C. 2 (p.6) between the words “such as” and “duties.”

Arguing against the amendment was that it made the legislating specifics too detailed and unnecessarily loaded the charge to schools.

Should then, it was asked, all of the examples following “such as” be stripped?

There was a disinclination to change the wording of a policy that has already been reworked and rewritten (in the absence of something egregious needing correction).

The amendment was called to vote and was defeated.

A member of the medical school faculty compared the tone of the discussion to that which preceded the adoption of a clinical track, and suggested that a series of town hall meetings could help counter the angst. People need to understand the broad sense of practitioner.

Is the lecturer position in the tenure document?

The professor of practice track is especially relevant to departments that teach foreign languages. At other schools with similar positions – for example, Harvard – the criteria and procedures are clearly stated. It is important to bring foreign language faculty into the discussion.

The chancellor charged the Senate Council with deciding whether to hold town hall meetings, and wished everyone a good end of the semester and happy holidays.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy E. Berg
Secretary, Faculty Senate