

Faculty Welfare Committee
University of South Carolina Faculty Senate
Annual Report for 2015-2016

The Faculty Welfare Committee was very busy during the 2015-216 academic year taking on its own initiatives and responding to concerns raised by faculty from around the University. A major theme that ran through the various issues taken on by the committee was how to increase and improve communication across campus—among faculty and between the faculty and the administration. To this end the committee invited several guests to its monthly meetings and undertook initiatives and direct actions on behalf of the faculty to facilitate greater communication, including the new provost, Joan Gabel, who attended the January meeting at the Committee’s invitation.

Committee Membership for 2015-2016

- Christian K. Anderson, Education Leadership and Policies (2017), Co-chair
- Beverly Baliko, Nursing (2016)
- Mark Beck, Languages, Literature, and Culture (2017)
- Roozbeh Behroozmand, Communication Sciences and Disorders (2018)
- Shelley Jones, English, Extended University (2018)
- Camelia Knapp, Earth and Ocean Sciences (2016)
- Susan Kuo, Law School (2017)
- Andrea L’Hommedieu, University Libraries (2017), Co-chair
- Shanna Schaffer, University Libraries (2018)

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

- Dependent Tuition Assistance: A scholarship for dependents of faculty and staff exists, but information is hard to find and the process for applying is not exactly clear. Andrea L’Hommedieu led an effort to improve the type of information available, to make the process more transparent, and to raise the amount available to students who are children of USC employees. She also raised the issue of how the University should make funding this scholarship at higher level a priority. The amount was raised from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year and will incrementally rise to \$3,000. Scott Verzyl, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Joey Derrick, Director of Financial Aid, and Cindy Peachey, Associate Director of Financial Aid, attended the committee’s meeting in April to discuss questions regarding eligibility requirements and funding for Faculty/Staff Dependent Scholarships. They explained that the Education Foundation approved an increase from the static amount of \$240,000 for the last

ten years to \$375,000 for 2016-2017. This sum will cover the incremental increase to \$2000 for 2016-2017. The Education Foundation is aware of further incremental increases over the following two academic years but has not promised increased funds. Only about 50% of applicants receive the award because of limited funding. This affects minority and first-generation college students most. The selection criteria align with departmental scholarship awards. There are two forms of publicizing: the HR benefits site has information on the program, and applicants to the Columbia campus who indicate they are dependents of faculty or staff (usually by waiving the application fee) are mailed a scholarship application.

- Faculty Club and Collegiality Lunches: Members of the committee expressed an interest in finding ways to improve collegiality among faculty. The idea and feasibility of reviving the Faculty Club in some form has been explored throughout the year. During Spring 2016 the Committee piloted a program of “Collegiality Lunches,” funded by the Committee’s Educational Foundation fund that was previously designated for flu shots (and no longer needed for that purpose due to changes in insurance coverage). In February two lunches were held for faculty senators and additional lunches were held in March and April. A total of 65 from all across the University participated. A survey was sent to participants in May and the results were overwhelmingly positive. Participants reported that they talked to colleagues from across campus that they would have not otherwise met and some of these led to immediate connections or at least discussions about common research and teaching interests. The Committee plans to continue this program in some form in the upcoming year.
- Parking: The co-chairs of the committee worked closely with Derrick Huggins, Vice President for Facilities and Transportation, throughout the year to gain information about plans for changes in parking and transportation, to advocate for greater communication to faculty, and to ask that introduction of and increases in fees be delayed until a clearer plan can be introduced to faculty with sufficient notice. Because of the frequent meetings held with Mr. Huggins, including his attendance at one of the Committee’s meetings, there seems to be an understanding of the need for greater communication to faculty and he attended the spring General Faculty meeting to outline plans. However, there is still room for improvement in communicating changes in parking, including temporary closures, to faculty. Despite the co-chairs’ and Committee’s advocacy for a delay in the introduction of fees to parking lots that were previously free and the increase in fees to garages, these hikes will take place. A central concern was that at the end of Spring Semester Parking Services still had no firm plan in place and many faculty could return in the fall unclear on or unaware of these fees.

- Active Shooter Training: The potential for violence on any college campus is an ongoing concern. Christian raised the issue that staff in the Division of Student Affairs are required to attend active shooter training and yet faculty, who are in the spaces where an incident is most likely to occur, are not. USC Police Chief Chris L. Wuchenich was invited to discuss ways to increase the number of faculty who receive active shooter training as well as how faculty should be aware of other campus safety issues. He reported that college campuses are generally among the safest environments and crime has been going down steadily on campus and violent crime comprises only a very small percentage. Stalking and harassment is the most prevalent crime on campus. He explained that any faculty can file incident report to Behavioral Intervention Team if they feel a referral is needed (<http://www.housing.sc.edu/bit/index.html>). The Police Department conducts 2-3 Active Shooter classes each year with the Center for Teaching Excellence and can do more upon request with any college or department, which provides the added benefit of tailoring the class to that particular building. A concern was raised about how to encourage more participation given that the training is about 2 hours long.

Researching Specific Concerns

- Name Change and Email Policy: – Andrea and Christian met with University Technology Services about the problem that certain faculty, especially female faculty who have changed their last name, have with how their name appears in the online directory and on Blackboard. Some progress was made in finding ways for Human Resources to help with this issue, but the problem was not fully resolved.
- Prescription Coverage Changes: Changes have been made in the prescription authorization protocol. The Committee advocated that at least 6 months notice be given for future changes in benefit (versus the 6-8 weeks given in this case) to assure that there is no interruption in prescription services
- Child Care during Conference Travel: Andrea introduced the idea for a fund for childcare reimbursement for conference attendance to allow faculty on the tenure track to attend national conferences. Some faculty are not able to attend conferences or meetings, which are important to their professional development and progress toward tenure, due to the high cost of child care. This issue will be explored further in the upcoming year.
- Diversity: John Dozier, Chief Diversity Officer, attended the October meeting to discuss the new Graduation with Leadership Distinction in Diversity and Inclusive Practice. He also invited the co-chairs to become members of the new Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

- Carolina Card Replacement: Concerns were raised about the policy of obtaining replacement Carolina Cards and how staff in that office treat faculty who come in for a new card. This was noted as an example of the more global discussion about issues of relationships between faculty and other divisions on campus. The Committee sent a memo to Carolina Card office to have a policy added whereby faculty are allowed a free replacement every 5 years.
- One Carolina/PeopleSoft Issues: The issue of how the implementation of new software and databases have affected faculty, including that the My Carolina interface is not a user-friendly interface, that travel reimbursement now come as paper check instead of direct deposit and often a great deal of time, and that the process has been mismanaged (as reported in the media).
- Summer Salary: The creation of a university policy on summer salary compensation has been suggested by the Faculty Advisory Committee as each college/department handles it differently. They asked that the FWC also consider this issue, which the Committee will continue to look into in the upcoming year.
- Flu Shots: Faculty received e-mail notification that employees covered by the State Health Plan can receive influenza immunizations with no co-pay through in-network pharmacies/providers. As such the Committee will no longer need to provide funding for immunizations and can use its funding in other ways.

Ongoing Annual Responsibilities

The co-chairs or other representatives of the Faculty Welfare Committee served on the following committees to represent the Committee:

- Working Wellness Council
- Academic Affairs and Faculty Liaison Committee of the Board of Trustees
- Faculty Budget Committee
- Faculty Steering Committee

Submitted by Andrea L'Hommedieu and Christian Anderson, co-chairs, August 2016