

UFF-USF

United Faculty of Florida
University of South Florida Chapter
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Memorandum

To: Gregory Teague, FRRR Task Force Chair
From: Sherman Dorn, USF Chapter President, United Faculty of Florida
Date: May 4, 2009
Re: Faculty Roles, Responsibilities, and Rewards preliminary recommendations feedback

I appreciate the broad invitation of the task force for faculty to provide feedback in response to the preliminary recommendations as well as my personal invitation to participate in the April 30 forum that the task force held. Several members of the task force steering committee and workgroups are UFF members, and the participants in the task force's activities have spent hours on the issues involved and formulating the preliminary recommendations. The preliminary recommendations were proposed with the best of intentions regarding USF's future, and that is true whether or not I agree with each of those individual initial suggestions.

The comments in this document represent my best judgment as chapter president about issues directly related to the chapter's legal duties and authority or on issues that touch upon the values of the United Faculty of Florida and its members. A number of other UFF chapter members have provided feedback either on the task force's preliminary recommendations or drafts of this document. However, I am responsible for its final form. This document groups responses to the task force's preliminary recommendations in four areas: faculty appointments and assignments; faculty evaluation; compensation of faculty; and miscellaneous issues not directly related to collective bargaining.

Appointments and Assignments

Note: Appointments and assignments are mandatory subjects of bargaining. The USF-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement includes specific provisions related to appointments and assignments in Articles 8 and 9.

Faculty classifications and pay plans. Pay plans do not determine whether a job is inside the UFF faculty bargaining unit at USF—job titles and duties are the critical issues. With few exceptions the UFF-USF chapter leadership does not care whether the pay plan title for an in-unit employee is "faculty," "professional," or something else that is appropriately respectful of the work that in-unit professional employees perform. We have repeatedly told upper-level administrators that as long as they are not trying to strip rights from professional employees by reclassifying employees out of the bargaining unit, we have few concerns about shifting job codes from one plan to another. The one exception is regarding librarians, who are currently and appropriately considered faculty. If it is in the university's interest to affect the pay plan for librarians, it would be wise to create a pay plan specifically for them and call it the "faculty librarian" pay plan or another term that librarians themselves choose.

Differentiated staffing within tenured ranks. It is not clear from the preliminary recommendations whether the proposal in this regard is to set up rigid tracks for tenured faculty. Differentiated staffing exists among tenured faculty in a de facto sense. Tenured associate professors who are not active scholars do not get promoted to full professor today, and without active scholarship, tenured faculty are going to have very different work lives from the work of both tenured and tenure-track faculty with active scholarship, especially in bench sciences and other fields with grant-dependent scholarship.

But that de facto differentiation is not the same as rigid tracking. Making such distinctions in a formal career-limiting sense could be inconsistent with other statements in the preliminary task-force recommendations about valuing the entire range of faculty activities at USF, and it is inconsistent with my reading of the feedback of faculty to the Rewards workgroup survey. In addition, a hard-and-fast career-long differentiation would be inconsistent with the arrangement of professional leave time for long-term administrators when returning to the faculty. If administrators are allowed to shift paths and given time to do so, then it would be a double standard to create a structure whereby tenured faculty cannot.

Finally, making such distinctions in a formal career-limiting sense would have discriminatory impacts by gender, affecting faculty who are the primary caretakers of young children or dependent parents (in the U.S., predominantly women in both categories). The year after UFF and USF bargained a parental-leave program, it strikes me as something that could undermine the intent of that program if faculty perceive that they have to choose between caring for their children by using parental leave, on the one hand, and committing to intensive research for the rest of their career, on the other hand. Some discussion in national higher-education forums in the last year has focused on the perceived family-unfriendliness of

research universities, and it would be unfortunate if USF contributed to that perception by creating a rigid career-long tracking system for tenured faculty.

Evaluation

Note: evaluation is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. This includes issues such as annual review and permanent employment status (in academe, tenure). The Collective Bargaining Agreement touches upon evaluation at several points, including in Articles 10, 11, 14, and 15.

Post-tenure review. The current collective bargaining agreement language includes post-tenure review guidelines in Article 10.3B, which is legacy language from the old statewide contract. Post-tenure review happened as a formal procedure once statewide, as several chairs noted in their response to the Responsibilities workgroup survey. In local bargaining, UFF has never proposed removing that language, but all faculty should be aware that extensive paperwork projects such as a university-wide post-tenure review absorb valuable staff and administration time that could otherwise be engaged in different work.

“Credible metrics for evaluation.” The meaning of this phrase in the Rewards workgroup recommendation is not clear, but it suggests that the workgroup is dissatisfied either with the current 5-point scale (from 1=poor to 5=outstanding) or with the procedure and results of existing annual evaluations (and I assume the latter). The collective bargaining agreement defines some procedural requirements, but it puts the guts of the annual-evaluation procedure in the hands of everyone at the department level (or the equivalent of a department). Anyone proposing a different procedure for evaluation would have to explain why departments should not be in charge of annual reviews and why alternatives would not cause more problems. That does not mean that alternatives would not be appropriate, but rather that all evaluation systems have advantages and disadvantages and discussions of specific alternatives must be open about the potential consequences.

The role of non-tenure-track faculty in annual evaluations of tenured and tenure-track faculty. As stated in the paragraph immediately above, the current collective bargaining agreement puts many decisions about annual-review procedures in the hands of department (or equivalent-unit) faculty, including the composition of any peer-review committee, and the wording of the preliminary recommendations appears to confirm a preference for department-level decision-making about peer-committee composition. In terms of legal authority, I do not think that the USF administration can pull back recognition from a previously-approved set of guidelines without either a change in law that creates a specific conflict between the guidelines and new law or without collectively bargaining such authority. On the other hand, I think it is a healthy process for departments to regularly review all governance documents, including the procedures for annual review.

I am concerned with a potential for a double-standard or unproductive discussion of this issue based on status rather than expertise. It would be a perfectly defensible intellectual position to note that many non-tenure-track faculty have expertise primarily in teaching rather than scholarship, and to argue as a consequence that to provide appropriate feedback to tenure-track faculty, maybe non-tenure-track faculty whose expertise lies in teaching can more fairly evaluate teaching than the research of tenure-track faculty. Or, to pick another example, non-tenure-track faculty may be soft-money researchers whose expertise does not include teaching. But that principle can become problematic: is everyone excluded from evaluating work in which they do not have primary expertise? No matter who is chair, dean, or vice president or provost, those individuals will have academic backgrounds in a small slice of the disciplines taught and researched at USF, and yet we fully recognize that they can and have to make tenure and promotion recommendations in areas outside their immediate expertise. Perhaps a more fruitful area for discussion is to ask what critical mass of expertise must be **included** in reviewing rather than whom we **exclude**.

Rolling or multi-year evaluation of scholarship. Multi-year evaluation of scholarship contains risks for tenure-track faculty, because a positive evaluation based in part on work done several years back could give assistant professors misleading feedback on their progress towards tenure. Ultimately, applicants for tenure will have to point to evidence that their body of work pre-tenure is consistent and predictive of future scholarship activity. There are tools whereby faculty can communicate year-by-year progress on long-term projects, and both UFF and some administrators recommend these tools to tenure-track faculty.

Compensation: Salaries and benefits

Note: All compensation issues are mandatory subjects of collective bargaining. The USF-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement describes a broad variety of agreed benefits and salaries, primarily in Articles 17, 18, 22, 23, and 24.

Punishing low-performing faculty with pay decreases. Any employee who fails to earn a raise for several years is effectively given a pay cut without explicit punitive action by the university; if you doubt this claim, please talk to USF staff, who have not received base raises for almost half a decade. Given the fact that inflation encroaches on the purchasing power of faculty salaries in many years even with raises, the vagaries of the current economy and resulting uncertainties of jobs for spouses and partners of faculty, and the generous research literature in many disciplines on the superiority of positive reinforcement over aversive treatments, this was an unfortunate suggestion in the Responsibilities workgroup's preliminary recommendations.

Merit-based salary raises. In every bargaining survey conducted by the UFF-USF chapter since local bargaining began, faculty have strongly supported merit raises. Faculty have supported merit raises based on annual evaluations a little less strongly than they have across-the-board raises, but they support merit raises far more strongly than they do centralized discretionary raises. This preference in the

UFF-USF bargaining surveys is consistent with the responses of faculty to the Rewards workgroup survey.

Merit pay based on more than one year's evaluation. The point made by the Rewards workgroup (that some faculty are disadvantaged when they have a substantial payoff in their work in a year with very low funding for raises) is valid in principle, and given the current funding situation, it is essential for the university to give faculty a reason to bear with what are unprecedented depressing times in academe. The effect of such inconsistencies would depend on variations in faculty evaluations, and it is an empirical question whether the potential effects from such variations/budget idiosyncrasies are greater or less than the effects of compression and inversion. In addition, it would be an interesting challenge for either the UFF-USF bargaining team or the BOT bargaining team to propose a contractual provision that would address this situation effectively without also creating complications that result in merit-raise calculation errors.

Providing 12-month (annualized) salaries for 9-month faculty. The UFF statewide (university-system) bargaining team proposed annualized salaries for 9-month faculty several times before 2003, and the UFF bargaining team was repeatedly rebuffed by the old Board of Regents. The UFF-USF bargaining team would consider in good faith any proposal by the USF BOT that would make it easier for employees on 9-month contracts to budget for the summer or that would make it possible for employees on 12-month contracts partially dependent on grants to convert to 9-month schedules when federal hit rates are low.

Institutional commitment to cost-sharing with prestigious fellowships that do not pay a full salary and benefits. This is a very interesting idea. Many fellowships (such as the Spencer Foundation postdoctoral award in education research) have a set amount that does not cover a faculty member's salary and benefits, and USF would save (a small amount of) money by guaranteeing the balance, supporting national awards at the same time.

Tuition-benefit transfers to dependents (as a benefit to attract faculty). The UFF has consistently proposed this at both the state level before the destruction of the old Board of Regents and in local bargaining since 2004.

Being aware of the effects on morale of a few, very large awards to individuals. The UFF agrees with this concern as expressed by the Rewards workgroup. In early 2003, the university distributed very large salary raises to 139 individuals. While there was a nominal faculty review process, the general university-wide impression was that eligibility criteria, nomination, and review was idiosyncratic by college and department, and the combination of the very large awards (some in excess of \$20,000) with the appearance of arbitrariness eroded morale. There is no evidence that the UFF-USF chapter is aware of that the university ever conducted a follow-up study to see if the large awards in 2003 helped with retention or any other goal of the university. *Though we are a research university, USF has never empirically evaluated the theory of action for this program.*

In late 2008, the university conducted a smaller project that looks somewhat familiar in some ways, distributing awards generally ranging between \$1,000 and \$4,000 to 221 librarians, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors in the bargaining unit (approximately 20% of those ranks—80% of those ranks did not receive any discretionary salary increase in the last quarter of 2008, and no instructor, advisor, or other in-unit professional employee received a discretionary salary increase in the last quarter of 2008). As in 2003, self-nomination was possible in some colleges and not in others, but some conditions were different: the awards were smaller than in 2003, there was no faculty review process, and chairs told chapter officers that they generally had fewer than 48 hours from the announcement of the discretionary-raise to the deadline by which they had to submit award nominations to their colleges. While male and female faculty in those ranks were approximately equally likely (or unlikely) to receive these discretionary awards, both the mean and median awards were larger for men than for women. (UFF is currently conducting follow-up analyses for specific areas of the university.)

The position of the UFF is that the worth of faculty receiving these awards is a different issue from concerns we have about the structure of few large awards. Many recipients are extraordinarily hard-working faculty. Many are union members, and I am always proud to see union members recognized. On the other hand, there are far more hardworking faculty who are not rewarded in this way than who are rewarded, and a reward structure that the majority of deserving faculty are never going to receive is a poor way to encourage long-term commitment to USF.

The basic fact is that the majority of USF faculty are underpaid and thus at risk of leaving. Two-thirds of in-unit USF faculty are paid below the national market salary for their ranks and disciplines. Approximately four-fifths of in-unit USF faculty who were promoted in the last few years to associate or full professor are paid below the national market salary for their disciplines and new ranks, and there is at least one recently-promoted full professor who received a discretionary increase in the last quarter of 2008 and is still paid approximately 70% of the national market salary for her rank and discipline. The University of North Carolina system has committed itself to paying faculty no less than 85% of the national market salary in comparative institutions for specific ranks and disciplines, and as long as the University of South Florida fails to match this commitment, we will be at a competitive disadvantage with UNC and other public university systems.

Rewarding a few faculty with large awards does not address the general problems with salaries at USF and sends the message to many faculty that the university only values a relative handful of us.

Summer salaries, award bonuses, and other one-time payments for research-active faculty. Some departments already provide summer support for scholarship by tenure-track faculty, and in-unit faculty in USF Health have historically been eligible for \$5,000 and \$10,000 bonuses based on peer-reviewed grants that replace hard-money salary support. The first falls under the collective-bargaining agreement provisions on supplementary summer appointments, and the second

under the discretionary authority given the university under the current collective bargaining agreement language for both salary adjustments and bonuses and other one-time payments. On the other hand, it would be inconsistent with the University's strategic goals to reward grants (the **input** to scholarship) without providing recognition for high-quality scholarship **outcomes**, such as publication of important books or other works of scholarship. At the April 30 forum organized by the task force, one participant said that "grant dollars are not a measure of scholarly production."

Other issues

This section addresses topics that are not mandatory subjects of bargaining but affect the morale and productivity of in-unit faculty and professional employees.

Collegial governance. The preliminary recommendations make no mention of either *faculty governance* or *collegial governance*, despite the professional expectation of academics that their role at a national research university includes joint academic decision-making, and despite the legally-mandated role of the Faculty Senate president on the university's Board of Trustees. In multiple forums—from the April 30 forum that the task force convened to surveys that the UFF has conducted, it is clear that faculty are concerned about a perceived lack of full collegial governance.

Support for grant management within colleges to reduce burdens on faculty. I agree with the members of the task force (and participants on April 30) that the research support infrastructure is both inadequate for and unaccountable to grant PIs. If the university wishes to measure department performance in terms of grants and other scholarship, it is important that there also be measures of infrastructure support for reciprocal accountability. I recommend that there be monthly reports reporting measures identified as critical by grant-active faculty and administrators of grant-dependent academic units.

The siren song of bottom-line grant budgets. Grants are a means to an end, yet they are too often portrayed at USF as measures of scholarship in and of themselves. USF is not alone in this myopia, but it is a long-term danger to USF's academic integrity to focus on award amounts rather than the end scholarship. This emphasis on dollar amounts, especially on full federal indirect/overhead rates, parallels the flaws we now see in the financial structure of the economy, especially the home mortgage industry—the short-term incentives to initiate loans, any loans, rather than incentives to expand home ownership with low default rates. Especially in hard budget times, there is a risk in providing incentives to win grants for the dollars rather than the scholarship.

A second potential danger is the way in which such emphasis might sidetrack tenure-track faculty from demonstrating independence and productivity in scholarship. One of the participants at the April 30 task-force forum explained that she had collected several "horror stories" (her expression) of tenure-track faculty who had been encouraged to write grants where they were never the PIs and

where it was impossible to secure enough time to write up results. It was exploitation, she said.

My point should be clear: the problem is not with grants or expectations that tenured and tenure-track faculty win grants in appropriate fields but with an institutional obsession with grant dollars rather than the scholarship that the grants make possible and the evidence of peer-reviewed respect that competitive grant awards document.

Respect for teaching. The phrasing in the preliminary recommendations, “quality of teaching is worth pursuing in its own right, **despite not being at the heart of the RU/VH definition**” (emphasis added) was infelicitous at best. I have heard from a few faculty that the drive towards AAU eligibility largely ignores the importance of teaching, especially undergraduate teaching, though legislators expect us to educate undergraduates, though many of our own graduate students are “home-grown,” and though research experience for undergraduates is a key component of our SACS reaffirmation several years ago. The absence of instructors from the discretionary increases in late 2008 supports that impression. The lack of emphasis on teaching is inconsistent with the lives of many research-intensive faculty. For hundreds of us, we have professional identities both as teachers and as researchers, and it would be inappropriate for USF to create structures that put the two roles in direct conflict. The wording is also inconsistent with our own lived experience: Is there any member of the faculty who thinks that their undergraduate and graduate classes were entirely irrelevant to their careers at USF?

The “no chumps” principle. Towards the end of the April 30 task-force forum, Professor Steier asked participants to identify what we would recognize as success in five years if the institutional had successfully addressed issues regarding faculty roles, responsibilities, and rewards. One participant at my table identified what I will now call the “no chumps” principle, after her phrasing: No faculty member who puts forth enormous effort in teaching many students, organizing or reorganizing the curriculum, administering large and complicated grant budgets, or engaging in other valuable work should have legitimate reason to regret those choices, to conclude that they were chumps to agree to the work because the University failed to respect and reward the effort.

About the United Faculty of Florida

The United Faculty of Florida is the recognized collective-bargaining agent for more than 1600 ranked faculty, advisors, researchers, and other professional employees at the University of South Florida because USF faculty have chosen UFF as its union. Over more than 30 years, UFF has fought for collective-bargaining language protecting academic freedom, preserving fair apportionment of intellectual-property rights, guaranteeing due process rights in evaluation and tenure/promotion processes, improving faculty and professional-employee salaries in general, pushing merit pay, expanding the scope of antidiscrimination

protections, creating a parental leave program, and expanding sabbatical opportunities. In addition, as an organization legally responsible for enforcing the collective bargaining agreement, it has the authority to investigate potential violations and gather information as appropriate. Finally, as an independent voice of faculty across Florida, the United Faculty of Florida defends academic values in public.

How the UFF-USF chapter will look at the task force work

The UFF-USF chapter welcomes all bargaining suggestions from those the UFF represents, and for that purpose the chapter conducts a survey of in-unit faculty and professional employees for each round of bargaining. The chapter will consider the task force's final recommendations and task force survey responses from more than 300 in-unit faculty as important information in that vein to be combined with other information about the bargaining unit's preferences.

Joining UFF

All members of the bargaining unit should join UFF. Information about joining UFF is available at faculty.ourusf.org/join-uff/