

Academic Affairs Committee meeting
March 15, 2010, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Newcomb Hall Room 481

Minutes

Present: Brandt Allen, Daniel Bluestone, Chris Ghaemmaghami, Ann Hamric, Mary Gibson, Larry Phillips, Lynda Phillips-Madson, Michael Puri, Sarah Turner, Gweneth West.

Guests: John Teahan and Milton Adams

In Committee Chair Bob Kemp's absence, Ann Hamric called the meeting to order and introduced the topic of the meeting, the proposed creation of a new Professor of Practice rank. She presented John Teahan and Milton Adams with questions posed by Committee members who could not be present. Milton would expect these hires to be the same as any other non-tenure-track hire in a school. There would be a search committee, with the dean of the faculty or school involved. The school would have to submit a form to explain to EOP why this person is uniquely qualified. Though this rank was requested by the Batten School, it could be used by other schools where applicable. The process for the Batten School would probably be to see who is available – between positions or retiring, and decide who they need.

Gweneth West saw a useful role for this in drama and other art-related fields. These would be individuals distinguished in a performance field, even if they don't have a terminal degree.

Professors of Practice would probably be expected to teach, but not engage in scholarship or research. Someone who was retiring might be writing a book. The rank enables schools to hire individuals who bring to the classroom some expertise that interests students but lack academic credentials. Dean Harding wants to bring in people with substantial experience, but they'd only stay for a few years.

A question was asked about potential extensions beyond the seven-year limit in the policy. Could someone just decide to retire here in one of these positions? What protections can be put in place to prevent this? Is there a specific job description for what they're going to do, beyond just providing value for school?

John Teahan said that the language in this proposal is standard boiler-plate language used by many universities. In Dean Harding's view, these appointments would be "temporary" – from their regular position, then back into that position. Some other deans, however, did raise concerns about this morphing into something it wasn't intended to do.

It was pointed out that in some schools, you participate in everything and vote on everything, whether tenured or non-tenured. We would have to state clearly if we want to exempt this particular rank from that participation.

A question was asked whether it is implicit that this is a full-time position. It is important to make expectations clear in this document.

John Teahan said that the intent of creating this new rank is to pull them out, not have them seen as non-tenure-track faculty. These people are not supposed to have a career path here; they are

only supposed to be here for a finite number of years. However, the document is flexible enough that they could keep applying for and receiving extensions. Perhaps the time could be shortened from six to seven years max to less.

The Committee discussed how the position would be funded. It was suggested that deans be asked to supply guidelines for the positions, perhaps adding a sentence, "Each dean should create a job description for this rank," in more detail than the broad language that is here now.

John pointed out that this differs from visiting faculty, which has a specific meaning: they have done work at another university and are just visiting here. Professors of Practice would have no affiliation with another college or university. Deans considered allowing a percentage of each school to hold this rank, but decided against that because it would be an advantage to larger schools and a disadvantage to smaller schools. Instead they chose a small number (five), to apply across the board.

Milton Adams said that U.Va. has non-tenure-track appointments that are indistinguishable in title from tenure-track. This Professors of Practice rank was purposely made unique in relation to visiting professors and adjunct faculty. Professors of Practice are to be here a short time; they are nationally known in their fields. The Professor and Associate Professor ranks came as a direct result of Dean Harding's review. He comes from a school that has two ranks for flexibility, having to do with the number of years of experience. Originally there was just one rank – Professor.

Discussion followed about the two ranks: The two ranks imply that there are salary differences. How are salaries determined? Would they be hired at the rates current in that specific school? We have great variability already among schools. Is an associate level rank desirable? It could be appropriate for someone who hasn't been out in the world for ten years but would still have a lot to offer. However, if this is an eminent person, does it matter if they are young or old, etc.? We could change this wording and do away with the associate position.

Milton said that some deans want this flexibility. They thought someone might come along who was not eminent enough for a full professor, but who would be valuable – like a photojournalist who won the Pulitzer but has only been around five years. Salary is greater for a Professor than for an Associate Professor. There probably would not be huge salaries; salaries might be tiny if the person is independently wealthy and just wants to come teach for a few years. Negotiation would be between the person and school inviting them.

There was discussion of term limits: Some thought a term of seven years sounds long, especially given the rationale in the document that they have little to offer once they are out of the job that gave them prominence. How about three, with an extension to four? However, when people similar to these take positions in Darden, they envision spending one to three years learning how to teach, so they see this as longer than a three-year assignment. By this standard, the six-year limit sounds appropriate. Others expressed discomfort with the idea that this time period would allow them to learn to teach; they should come already able to convey their wisdom.

Milton said that this started out as a one-year appointment, but discussions led to the time being extended in this way. The document contains a clause that the candidate should demonstrate some ability to at least mentor, if not teach, already.

The committee discussed changing the wording to “up to five years, or four with a possible extension to five.” It will be good to differentiate this from Expectation of Continued Employment, even if symbolically.

The Executive Council will discuss this issue as well, but the vote needs to take place in the Academic Affairs Committee before moving it on to the full Faculty Senate. It will then go to the Board of Visitors for review at the June meeting.

Ann said we want to have a draft by the time of the Faculty Senate working meeting, where we could look at it and discuss it, then take a formal vote in April.

The Committee determined that there is an established need for this rank, it just requires fine tuning. In a straw poll on whether to have the associate rank, three were in favor, three opposed, and one abstained.

The opinion was expressed that it might be easier to get approval by the Faculty Senate if the associate rank is not in there. Since this is new to UVA, we could take it in two steps – first bring in the Professor rank, then fine tune it.

In a straw poll about whether the term length of the position should stay the same or change, one voted in favor of keeping the term at six to seven years; six voted to shorten the term length.

The Committee asked Milton and John to go back to the deans with these concerns and suggestions, and perhaps come back to us with rationales.

Daniel Bluestone arrived toward the end of the meeting and expressed serious reservations about the Professors of Practice rank and its impact on the Architecture School. He was invited to come to the Executive Council meeting on March 19 to discuss the School’s concerns.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.