

Minutes for College of Science Faculty Council Meeting (11/18/2024)

In attendance: Ross Buchan, Paul Goodman, Aneta Kielar, Shankar Venkataramani, Xiquan Dong, Jeffrey Pyun, Cynthia Anhalt, Tynan Lazarus, Florian Hafner, Brenda Frye, Alex Burant, Carlos Vargas, Haijian Cai, Sam Gralla, Heidi Hamann, Susan Bridgewater, Carmie Garizone, Brad Story

Not in attendance: Todd Proebsting, Scott Saleska, Nicole Leitner, Christopher Hamilton, Bryan Black

Quick recap

The meeting began with a discussion and additional feedback on a Faculty Workload Guidelines document drafted by COS admin for guiding Departmental Heads and Faculty on workload-related issues. The Dean presented College-wide data on faculty salary adjustments and attrition in recent years. Committees were confirmed (or re-established) to address various issues, including salary and compensation, faculty career development, DEI, Workload and Transparency and Strategic planning.

Next steps

- Workload & Transparency Committee (WTC) to revise the Faculty Workload Guidelines document based on meeting discussions and comments collected from FC members from the prior month.
- Committee chairs to discuss with their members and propose 2-3 goals for the 2024 academic year within 8 days.
- Committee chairs to send proposed goals to Ross and Paul (Chair and Co-chair).
- Ross to follow up with committees after Thanksgiving to finalize goals and determine first steps.

Summary

Minutes from the prior meeting approved

Faculty Workload Guidelines Document Review

Tynan Lazarus (WTC chair) initiated a discussion of the faculty workload guidelines document. The faculty workload guidelines aims to provide a general guideline of effort allocated to teaching, research, and service as a starting point for hires in different tracks, and the types of activities that would count in each category – however, it allows flexibility for departments and individuals based on their context, priorities and career stages.

The document was reviewed and edited by the WTC specifically, and open to FC member comments generally in the past month. Specific aspects of the document (clarity, additional items of consideration, points of accuracy) were discussed, while trying to ensure the document remained general enough to usefully apply to all COS departments. Some particular points of discussion included:

1. Paul Goodman commented that faculty workload needed to be commensurate with experience (e.g., assistant professors being protected from excessive teaching/service workloads), which is common practice and typically part of offer letters as indicated by Dean Garizone and Brad Story.
2. Jeff Pyun raised concerns about the quantification of research workload, particularly in relation to the number of graduate students professor mentors (i.e., some may have much more than others). While it was generally agreed that this should be taken into account when assessing research effort during performance reviews, “equivalency” metrics were deliberately excluded during the document’s creating, as this was felt to leave department-specific context and flexibility in assessing effort.
3. A general discussion of how students in research labs should be classified in terms of effort (teaching v research) ultimately leaned towards students working on lab-focused priorities as counting in the research category. The feasibility of teaching undergrads for teaching credit in a research lab setting has been discussed between Dean Garizone and Department Heads at other recent meetings (details unclear).
4. A discussion of workload rebalancing accounting for changing faculty circumstances (e.g., increase or decrease in research productivity, altered service obligations), as well as departmental circumstances was held. The FC concluded that this should be something a faculty member can readily request of their department head, who will have ultimate approval power. A department head may also initiate discussion of workload rebalancing, for example during annual performance reviews. Concern was noted that some faculty towards the end of their careers don’t visibly take on additional teaching/service tasks despite decrease research effort/productivity.
5. Faculty burnout is hypothesized by the Secretary of the Faculty senate to be due to onerous levels of service, and that this should be capped at 10%. The accuracy and feasibility of this remains unclear.

Brad Story will work on integrating the FC comments, and the WTC will finalize their edits following this. The conversation ended with Ross expressing his appreciation for everyone's participation.

Dean Garizone – presentation on Faculty Salaries and Attrition in the COS

Dean Garizone highlighted that key concerns of the recent COS faculty survey were salaries and attrition. She presented College-wide aggregated data showing the progress made in faculty salaries over the past few years relative to peer public institutions, with a significant increase in 2020 and a continued growth rate through 2024. She noted that the university has been closing the gap in salaries compared to its AAU peers, particularly for assistant and associate professors, though a significant gap remains at full professor level. In non-tenure ranks, the COS outperformed other AAU peer institutions. Dean Garizone also mentioned that the university has been doing a better job of

hiring tenure-track faculty closer to the average of public peers. However, there was no increase in 2025 due to the lack of a salary program. She noted that the data for 2024 was not yet integrated into the institutional data and would be available by the end of the year. Dean Garizone mentioned she has received a commitment for FY25-26 to implement the last year of a 4-year faculty salary increase program across COS departments for the upcoming year, which had been on pause due to pandemic/financial crisis reasons.

Categorizing Career Track salaries is challenging across institutions, and even among departments, as the variety of positions (e.g., PoP, Instructor, Lecturer) is highly variable.

Dean Garizone noted the high attrition rate in 2023, and that the attrition rate for tenure-eligible faculty in the current year was lower, but still concerning. Based on recent years, the COS loses 12-15 tenured faculty, or about 3%, which is comparable or better than peer institutions. Dean also mentioned that the attrition rate for non-tenure eligible career track faculty was the highest she had seen in recent years. She expressed concern about the future attrition rate and the need to track it closely. Discussions with department heads about known impending retirements do inform future hiring plans.

The FC anticipates being able to share this presentation, following additional discussions with the Dean and Department Heads.

Ross recapped the recent subcommittee assignments, encouraging the team to come up with achievable action items in the coming weeks.

DEI subcommittee

Ross highlighted the work of the DEI Committee, chaired by Carlos Vargas, which has been making recommendations for improving diversity hiring and retention strategies, as well as sharing best practices and resources. The hiring of a DEI specialist to support COS DEI efforts remains a desired future goal.

SPFI hiring is to be reinstated according to Dean Garizone, albeit at a likely lower funding level.

Workload and Transparency subcommittee

Ross also mentioned the Transparency Committee, chaired by Tynan Lazarus which is currently working on the aforementioned Faculty Workload Guidelines and practices related to workload changes and attrition.

Tynan discussed the need for transparency in service tasks, and the allocation of credits for teaching classes, particularly in relation to class sizes. He suggested that departments create internal documents outlining the baseline credits for different class sizes, with more credits awarded for larger classes due to increased administrative duties. Tynan also highlighted the difference in workload between teaching a small graduate class and a large undergraduate lecture, and suggested that departments should consider these factors when assigning courses. The FC agreed that such

guidelines would be beneficial, but also acknowledged the potential for many variables and the need for further discussion.

Salary and Compensation subcommittee

Ross led a discussion about the Salary and Compensation subcommittee, focusing on addressing salary disparities and identifying strategies to improve compensation or other benefits. The committee's potential goals included prioritizing salary recommendations for COS admin, addressing salary disparities, and exploring other benefits like discretionary research funding. Dean Garizone stated that the 2% IDC takeback was based on last year's expenses but was distributed to departments. This seems inconsistent with recent Faculty Senate announcements indicating the program is over and will be further investigated.

Faculty Career Development and Planning

Ross introduced the faculty career development subcommittee, which aims to improve career development opportunities, awareness and understanding of tenure mechanisms, and improve “onboarding” of new faculty hires.

Strategic Planning Committee

Ross introduced the strategic planning committee, chaired by Christopher Hamilton, which will document and identify broad goals of the FC, record goals that were created, and what was achieved, in part to facilitate an efficient transfer of knowledge during new FC leadership. The ability to interface with and facilitate strategic planning efforts across COS departments is also a goal.

Ross asked all subcommittee members to work together to come up with 2-3 goals by the end of the week and that he will check in after Thanksgiving.

He also mentioned ongoing conversations about collecting data, and that some academic program review data was already publicly available, with more promised to follow.