

Faculty Affairs Committee

Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) Meeting Minutes

Location: Zoom

Note: Last scheduled FAC meeting of the semester

Members/Guests Present

Zack Zenko, Amber Stokes (Vice Chair), Sarana Roberts, Najmeh Kamyabi, David Gove, Debbie Boschini (AVP Faculty Affairs), Kristen Gallant

1. Call to Order & Agenda

The meeting was called to order, and the agenda was reviewed and followed as presented.

2. Review and Approval of Previous Minutes

October 16 Minutes

- The committee revisited the October 16 minutes in light of discrepancies identified after reviewing the Zoom transcript.
- Two key corrections were noted:
 - The town hall was generally described as having gone well, but “**with some exceptions**” should be recorded to more accurately reflect the discussion.
 - A statement suggesting that a sabbatical could be “automatically approved the next year” based on the CBA was identified as inaccurate.
- Members were asked to **carefully reread** the October 16 minutes.
- The plan is to **approve the October 16 minutes via email** after members confirm they have reviewed the revised draft.

October 30 & November 13 Minutes

- Draft minutes for October 30 and November 13 will be posted on Box.
- Members were asked to review these carefully; formal approval was **deferred** to a future date (likely via email or early next semester).

3. Announcements & Committee Continuity

- This was the **final FAC meeting of the semester**.
- The chair expressed appreciation for committee members’ work and perspectives throughout a demanding term.

- One member will be on **sabbatical next semester**, and the chair acknowledged their upcoming leave and contribution to the committee.
- The chair noted this is **their last year as FAC Chair** and encouraged members who are early in their Senate terms to consider future leadership roles (including FAC chair) and to think about continuity on the committee.

4. ASCSU Lecturer Electorate Procedures Resolution

- The committee revisited the resolution clarifying eligibility for the ASCSU lecturer Senate seat, incorporating small technical edits to:
 - Limit the list of lecturer classification codes to those actually used on campus.
- No further discussion or concerns were raised.
- **Action:** The committee voted to **move the ASCSU lecturer electorate procedures resolution to Senate second reading.**

5. Sabbatical Application Process & Rubric

The committee resumed detailed discussion of the sabbatical resolution and supporting rubric, focusing on the **front-end screening process**, definition of “meritorious,” rubric interpretation, and application guidance.

5.1 “*Meritorious*” vs. “*Complete*”

- Current handbook language describes a **two-step process**: first distinguishing “meritorious” from “non-meritorious” applications, then ranking only the meritorious ones.
- Concerns:
 - The term “**meritorious**” at this first step has been read as a qualitative judgment rather than a threshold to proceed.
 - There is potential confusion that a proposal is either meritorious (reviewed) or automatically rejected at that stage.
- The committee discussed:
 - Distinguishing between:
 - **Complete:** all required components are present.
 - **Quality/merit:** evaluated through the **rubric** (e.g., developing/proficient/strong categories).
 - Whether to retain or remove a separate “meritorious” decision step.

Emerging approach:

- Replace the “meritorious vs. non-meritorious” language in the initial screening step with a **“complete vs. incomplete”** distinction.
 - **Incomplete** proposals would be **returned** to the proposer (as the first filter).
 - All **complete** proposals would be **scored and ranked via the rubric**.
- The rubric itself will be the primary tool for differentiating relative quality.

The committee recognized that in theory, complete but very weak proposals could still be ranked and, in an unusually large funding year, potentially funded. However, members felt that:

- At present, there is no rubric at all, so the new rubric represents a significant improvement.
- The immediate priority is to provide a **clear, usable structure** and revisit the policy in a few years if serious issues surface.

5.2 Use and Interpretation of the Rubric

Key points of discussion:

- Whether scoring in a “developing” column in one or more categories would automatically render an application non-meritorious or whether **overall score** should be the focus.
- The committee ultimately favored **avoiding rigid rules** that tie specific rubric cells directly to automatic disqualification and instead:
 - Score all complete applications.
 - Allow the Faculty Honors and Awards Committee (FHAC) to rank proposals based on total scores and professional judgment.

Members also discussed disciplinary differences:

- Standards for “professional productivity” and output vary widely across disciplines (e.g., STEM, social sciences, humanities, creative arts).
- The rubric is intended to:
 - Be flexible enough to account for these differences.
 - Encourage **applicants** to clearly explain their work and its significance in accessible language, recognizing that reviewers may be from other fields.

The committee underscored that applicants bear responsibility for communicating their proposed work, prior productivity, and benefits in a way that **non-specialists can understand**.

5.3 Descriptor Paragraphs for Rubric Sections

- Draft **descriptor paragraphs** were reviewed for the “Proposed Project” section and related categories.
- These paragraphs aim to:
 - Explain the overall purpose of each section.
 - Clarify what reviewers should attend to when rating (e.g., alignment with discipline, feasibility, potential impact, fit with applicant’s trajectory, or new directions).
- After discussion, the committee was generally supportive of keeping concise descriptors, especially where they help:
 - Address concerns about long-term projects.
 - Recognize that some sabbaticals may represent a **major shift** in scholarly or teaching direction.
- Edits were made to:
 - Clarify references to prior productivity and how it relates (or does not relate) to the proposed work.
 - Broaden examples of output (e.g., scholarly publications, creative works, course/curricular revisions, partnerships) that may enhance the university’s academic or public reputation.

5.4 Application Length and Guidance

- The committee discussed whether to include **page limits** in the handbook.
 - Experience has ranged from **very short** and vague applications to extremely long submissions.
 - While there is concern about overly long files, members also recognized:
 - Different disciplines may feel they need more space to explain methods or context.
 - Strict page limits could lead to contentious debates at Senate.
- Consensus:
 - Do **not** fix a specific page limit in the handbook language.
 - Instead, allow application format details (including recommended length) to be specified in the **application materials** managed by Academic Senate and FHAC.

5.5 Resolved Language & Administrative Role

- The “resolved” section was updated to clarify that:
 - The Academic Senate (rather than AVP for Faculty Affairs) with FHAC to keep **application submission materials** current and aligned with the rubric and policy.

- This allows practical guidelines (e.g., format, suggested length, submission instructions) to be updated without revising the handbook.

5.6 Action on Sabbatical Resolution

- After review and edits (including new descriptor language, the complete/incomplete framing, and clarification of “application submission materials”), the committee agreed the resolution was ready for the next step.
- **Action:** The committee voted to **move the sabbatical application process and rubric resolution to Senate second reading.**

6. Unit RTP and PTR Composition Resolution

The committee then turned to the updated **Unit RTP and PTR composition** resolution, which has been under development for multiple meetings.

6.1 Review of Revisions

Members were given time to read the updated draft (new edits highlighted). Key elements of the revised version include:

- **Committee size:**
 - Unit RTP committees will generally have **3–5 members**, balancing workload and representation.
- **Committee chair selection:**
 - Candidates may **recommend** a chair, but the **committee itself** ultimately selects its chair, consistent with other sections of the handbook.
- **Communication of committee membership:**
 - Units must provide:
 - The college dean with a list of members of every committee.
 - Each candidate with the list of **their own committee members**.
- **Participation expectation:**
 - Language is reinforced to make clear that **all members** of a unit committee are expected to:
 - Review the full file.
 - Participate in deliberations.
 - Review and sign the unit letter.

6.2 Eligibility to Serve & AVP Authority

- The section on **eligibility to serve** was refined, including language that allows the **AVP for Faculty Affairs** to determine when certain faculty should not serve on RTP/PTR committees (e.g., due to conflict, persistent unfairness, or other serious concerns).
 - The phrase “for unstated reasons” was flagged as problematic and potentially confusing.
- The committee acknowledged:
 - This authority must be used sparingly and based on verifiable concerns.
 - There should be a pathway for faculty to **regain eligibility** once issues are addressed.

6.3 Broader Discussion (Context, Not Policy Changes at This Meeting)

The resolution discussion prompted a broader conversation about:

- The **developmental vs. adversarial** nature of RTP processes.
- The emotional and professional toll of the process on some faculty, including perceptions of:
 - Moved goalposts.
 - Inconsistent or delayed feedback.
 - Differential experiences across demographics and disciplines.
- The use and potential **weaponization of minority reports**, as well as their role in:
 - Both protecting fairness in some cases.
 - Exacerbating conflict or undermining collegial deliberation in others.
- Concerns about:
 - Lack of interim feedback between formal reviews.
 - Variability in how criteria and expectations are communicated.
 - Inconsistent guidance on dossiers, personal statements, and file size/content.

These discussions were recognized as important **context** and will potentially inform future referrals and revisions (e.g., on RTP file content, timing, personal statement expectations, and how publications are counted across cycles), but no new policy language on these broader issues was finalized at this meeting.

6.4 Action on Unit RTP/PTR Resolution

- The committee agreed that, with the latest edits incorporated, the unit RTP and PTR composition resolution is ready to proceed.

- **Action:** The committee voted to **move the unit RTP and PTR composition resolution to Senate second reading.**

7. Upcoming Referrals (Preview)

Due to time, the committee did not take up new items in depth, but the chair briefly previewed future work, including a referral on:

- **Appointment of department chairs and program directors**, specifically:
 - Clarifying and potentially strengthening language about term limits and reappointment.
 - Addressing perceived inconsistencies in how deans interpret and implement current language across colleges.
 - Considering whether policy should require deans to follow unit recommendations except in clearly specified circumstances, while recognizing that in some units there may be no alternative candidates.

Members were encouraged to review this and other referrals in the shared folder prior to next semester.

8. Adjournment

The chair thanked committee members for a **thoughtful and productive semester**, acknowledged the intensity of the work, and encouraged continued engagement next term.

The meeting was then adjourned.