



June 1, 2004

MEMO TO: Faculty Senate
FROM: Faculty Welfare Committee, Dr. Diane Davis, Chair
RE: Faculty Search Process

During the 2003-4 academic year, there was an unfortunate confluence of events and miscommunications that led to an unsuccessful search for a new faculty member. The Faculty Welfare Committee was asked to investigate, and we conducted interviews with all involved parties. We felt that all parties believed they were acting in good faith, but nevertheless no party was satisfied with the outcome of the search. We attempted to identify any part in the written process that might be changed to prevent a reoccurrence and believe that an open discussion of the faculty search process is warranted.

The search process outlined in the current Faculty Handbook was developed fairly recently by an ad hoc committee and approved by the Faculty Senate and the administration. We do not recommend revisiting this procedure lightly. However, failed searches are costly in terms of both time and money, so we recommend that the following items be discussed:

1. Advertisements for faculty list discipline(s) that are acceptable and often also add a phrase such as "or a closely related field" so as to not exclude acceptable candidates who lack the precise degrees listed. If the search committee wants to include a candidate in a "closely related field", should a part of the search process be that the dean and/or the provost are consulted to be sure that the closely related field will be acceptable to all parties? Or should the policy call for a discussion among all involved parties before applications are reviewed to nail down what would constitute a "closely related" degree?
2. Should there be interim involvement of the deans and provost in candidate selection? For example, as the current procedure is written, the faculty search committee need only consult the dean for approval to bring candidates on campus to interview. Since this can be an expensive part of the search process and it represents a significantly narrow portion of the candidate pool, should the provost review the list of candidates to be brought on campus prior to extending them invitations? In some cases, the situation may have changed since the initial advertisement was developed (funding, change in mission, external mandates, etc.). Should interim communication with the deans/provost be mandated to insure that any changes are taken into account or that the search be aborted?

The above discussion items should not be construed as recommendations from the Faculty Welfare Committee. While the suggestions above may improve the chances that the final

candidate is acceptable to all parties, they also add an additional layer of bureaucracy that may be cumbersome, especially in time-sensitive situations. Further, faculty within an academic department should generally be the best judges of which candidates in “closely related fields” are acceptable, and faculty on the search committee should be the best judges of acceptable candidates since they reviewed all the CV’s and were present during the telephone interviews. On the other hand, the deans and the provost may have broader perspectives to contribute to the search process and do have final fiduciary responsibility. The Faculty Welfare Committee recommends a discussion as to how the current procedure does or does not preserve the autonomy of faculty to choose their colleagues while at the same time accommodating the needs of the administration to meet the broader needs of the university.