

Minutes, SFA meeting, December 3, 2014
8:30-10:00, PLC 125

Ron Cox opened the meeting at 8:34

Devotional: Song of Zechariah: Luke 1:68-79

Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes from the SFA meeting of October 15, 2014. Approved!

Summary of Responses: Vote on Resolution of Merit Based Pay Proposal:

Merit Pay Ballot had 122 ballots cast, 44 or 36% voted support, and 78/64% voted do not support. The dialogue boxes permitted comments, and Ron went through all comments. 79 of 122 or 65% provided written feedback with 56 comments from non-supporters, 23 from supporters, 72% to 52%

Ron shared the general comments with SFA Executive Committee meeting in October. He has distilled four themes, including reservations from supporters as well as those who did not support. Andy, Karen, and Ron (presidents) met with Dean Feltner and shared the big picture themes (but not actual results) with him.

Four themes discerned from ballot feedback

One: Lack of trust in the Administration and questions about the motivations of the Board. This was probably the largest issue, also from conversations as well as from the ballot feedback.

Two: Concerns about the amount of base salary and seeking a guarantee for future increases (he saw a plurality, not majority of people, who brought this up).

Specifically, people wanted guarantees about base salary. Some were concerned that our focus should be on this not merit, while others were concerned that the proposal did not mention any improvements for base salary.

Three: Problems with the merit pay proposal itself. Comments included that it was too complex (dealing with matters in addition to merit pay such as starting pay) or that it was too precise (example, the line, "all salary at Seaver College is merit based," which might preclude cost of living increases) or that it was too vague (for example, process for handling gender discrepancies). This category was diverse; there were also comments that it was too quick. Ron believes that while it was discussed over whole of last year, the summer interruption, increased the idea that this was happening quickly this year or because we are also dealing with Growing Seaver.

Four: Problems with the concept of merit pay. This was the smallest number. Ron noted that some were opposed on principle, expressing in some cases strong concern about what this might do to our community. Also, some suggested that the current scale rewards merit already and were satisfied with the current system, specifically finding the role of dean/chairs to be acceptable and based on merit.

What now?

Ron noted that the Dean is listening to the faculty on this vote, not pushing it on us. Some possibilities include:

--Merit pay proposal as written was rejected and is not likely to be “fixed,” so someone might come up with another proposal. There is no consensus about how to resolve or fix this proposal. Ron noted that we can’t rely on anything in the document; for example, it had a mechanism that would have allowed for SFA ExCom to meet with Dean every Fall to talk about starting salaries, and disciplinary deviations, and general talk about salary. Consultation is written into the Constitution, and we had been trying to actualize or regularize this in the proposal. We can still have discussions, but it isn’t codified—so we need to figure out how to go ahead with some of those despite the proposal being rejected.

--Current system—Dean in consultation with the chairs determines merit pay. What was meant as a stopgap for distributing merit pay now continues. Ron met with chairs, and chairs are grappling with this. He notes that some problems people saw with the proposal are also in this current system; for instance, on gender discrepancy, there are no controls or mechanisms to see if that’s happening. Another issue is that chairs might feel vulnerable, and feel like they can’t give constructive feedback to help faculty develop, etc.

Ron elaborated on his understanding about how the impetus for merit pay was the dean’s office not the board. Provost Marrs was responsible for the merit pay proposal because he orchestrated it when dean, along with the ad hoc committee. When Ron spoke to Marrs and Feltner, both made clear that the Board had no knowledge of this merit pay request. Ron reminded the faculty of the history that Andy Yuengert has provided about how merit pay came about. (In brief, the dean wanted more money, was denied, so he went back and asked for merit pay bucket. It is difficult for one school to say, we want increase in salary more than what other schools get, so this was a way to get more for Seaver. Central administration was trying to be sensitive to all schools, and yet reward Seaver for doing well. The administration might be more willing to consider merit pay than other increases, (and that could also reflect values of the board) but this was an effort to increase salaries that started with then Dean Marrs.

--A Study of the existing Seaver Salary Scale and how it rewards merit—Andy Yuengert has noted that because it is not a given that people will get steps or promotions, with consequences to their salary, we might work on finding data to show we do have a merit system. If we can make that case, then, we could make the case that extra 1.5-2% for merit pay bucket could go toward the current scale.

Andy is meeting with Nicole Marrs, Budget Director next week, and Ron and Karen Martin may also go, looking for data on that.

--Fostering continued communication between the Dean and the faculty on: 1) Salaries, specifically base salaries. Dean Feltner has agreed to talk more about

salaries; we are gathering more data. SFA Executive Committee will be talking about this. 2) Growing Seaver, funds are going into it and we need a greater voice in how that's spent. Dean Feltner said he would be clearer on what the funds have been spent on and increase dialogue about this with the faculty. 3) Shared governance.

Ron elaborated on the question of what it means to have shared governance. Merit based pay ballot is an example of shared governance. Saying no to the merit pay proposal doesn't mean we are saying no to shared governance; it doesn't mean we can vote yes or no on all matters. For example, on Growing Seaver, faculty cannot vote yes or no on that kind of broad budgetary decision. A vote on Growing Seaver would have been viewed as advisory and we would not have been able to stop it. The decision lay with the Dean's office; budgets are not as much in our area, while curriculum is. We do have an important role in discussing HOW we grow Seaver.

Shared governance is a step forward. Ron noted that we have a new university document on shared governance for four of the schools. We need to do more to understand what shared governance is and can be. The new document is on the Provost's website, so please read it. The document matters to administration's discussions these days. A feature in it is that shared governance in the individual schools needs to be worked out. We need to sit down with this dean and the next to lay out what shared governance will look like at Seaver.

Discussion:

C: What are we going to do now, since we are falling behind in salaries with inflation and with peer institutions? How are we going to be doing in the future if we continue to let that slide? We've lost gains of at least \$5,000 if not more in last 10 years, we have increased enrollment, assessment work, and have productive faculty in scholarship, more work. We are justified in asking administration, why don't we try to keep up with inflation and peers. Let's put together a short resolution to ask administration to acknowledge the problem that we are not keeping up and ask that they work with us to resolve the situation. We need to increase salary pool for all faculty. If we keep it simple and work together we would all benefit more.

Q. Asks for an explanation of tension and resentment from other schools.

A: Ron proposed that we need central administrators to answer our questions; he hopes in spring to have Dean Feltner to speak to faculty, but because he's interim, he hopes Provost Marrs and Paul Lassiter will speak to faculty. He suggests we give them this kind of question in advance, and then have a town hall to answer these and other questions. He has heard that other schools feel like Seaver gets lion's share of resources and that Malibu is favored. The perception is that there is that Malibu/Seaver have received positive attention in comparison to other schools.

Andy: Administration has addressed salaries; it is a mischaracterization to say administration has not acknowledged the problem, and they have started to address it and they need to continue to do so.

Comment: Bonuses is current term, and they are arbitrary and lack transparency, and that means there is a lack of trust in how they are given. For shared governance, we need a faculty senate. We need to make decisions about curriculum and budget. If we don't have a voice in growing Seaver and budget, how can we have a voice in curriculum?

Question/Comment: You said in constitution we should be in conversation regarding salaries every year? (Ron noted specifically the constitution says the SFA ExCom is charged with negotiating salaries, but not how/when.) We should have a resolution making this less nebulous since it's in the constitution.

A: Benefits, Stipends committee had been communicating some, but he hadn't noticed conversations between the SFA ExCom and Administration since 2010 when he was first on the committee. Last year, after discussion of numbers that came out of the benefits, stipends committee, Ron, Andy, and Cindy (presidents) went to Dean and asked for new numbers and for response. This new information was then provided to SFA. The intention was to start having prescribed regular meetings; we going to do that, but without the system laid out in the merit based pay proposal.

Comment: Strange to find out your raise when you go into sign your contract.

A: We're trying to work on that and clarify communication on raises.

Question/Comment: A former SFA president, he's heard different stories about what the procedure for getting the budget approved is. Despite formal process time-lines for decisions, he has heard that administrators in University Planning Committee meetings come in prepared and make quick decisions about whether they want to fund things; he noted that the process may have changed, but thinks we should find out more from our representatives on the University Management committee. (May mean University Planning Committee.)

A: Ron noted again that he wants Lassiter and Marrs to come speak so they can answer those kinds of questions. He noted that in our meeting of October 15, some people articulated about how the board does things, but he was then told later that's not how things happened. If there is a "useful fiction" in place, it doesn't help to repeat it within our discussions. We need to ask.

If anyone has resolutions, talk to your liaisons from your divisions or to Ron. The main mechanism for resolutions is to go through the SFA ExCom meeting. Read the constitution to understand the process.

Kendra Kilpatrick, as UPC rep, offered to answer anyone's questions about the budgeting process.

Updates: Visiting Faculty and Academic Standards in International Programs

Visiting Faculty

Ron noted that about 27 visiting faculty have served Seaver for 3 or more years. Some are on one year and some are on three-year contracts, and some have been here over 20 years. We presented a proposal last year for a Professor of Practice/Lecturer (originated in 2010). It had three elements; title, salary, evaluation. Since many visiting faculty play a substantial role and some are here long-term, some of them need to have a more appropriate title. As to salary—they presently do not necessarily have increases in salary, and they could be kept at the amount for many years; there is also no mechanism or clear understanding about how they are evaluated, since RTP is only for tenure track.

The proposal was brought to faculty at the April 16, 2014 SFA meeting. Many people spoke up on behalf of visiting faculty and provided compelling facts and stories. A lot of people spoke up with passion; it seems like a mandate for us to do something about that.

He has spoken to the dean and provost and they are receptive, at least to the title change. If we don't have that in place by end of spring, it will be our fault—they are open to that. We can't rush on salaries, but we need to do something, and it would be good to bundle the issues. The proposal had strengths, but one weakness, was that we have no data about salaries, or about what it would take to adjust them. Because of that, we don't even know what we're asking for and faculty are most empowered to make changes when we can be specific.

He plans to have actionable items and votes (if necessary) by April 2015 on title and salary. The SFA Executive has created an Ad Hoc committee comprised of Lincoln Hanks, Sarah Stone Watt, Susan Salas (15+ year visiting faculty member), and Ron Cox (chair). They will work on:

- Getting changed titles approved.
- Working with Dean's office to understand what it would cost to increase visiting faculty salaries to see how we can move them so long-term faculty can earn as much as assistant professors; benchmarking; trying to get data to see what that would look like. Sacrifices might need to be made—e.g., from Growing Seaver funds. If this is important to us, we need to make it happen.

Separating evaluation from the proposal: Ron will discuss with chairs the evaluation process for "visiting" faculty. It is his impression that the Dean's office thought the proposal provided a de facto tenure, suggesting a contractual obligation that they are unwilling to create. Plus RTP is strained. We need to find a way for chairs to come up with an agreed upon way to help visiting faculty to get feedback they need, especially if there are pay increases at stake; evaluation could help them know where they are at and to help them to be better at what they do.

Please let Ron or SFA ExCom members know if you have comments/suggestions.

Academics and International Programs

Concerns about the Academic aspects of the IP programs exist. Issues include

- GPA difference between IP programs and especially sophomores in Malibu
- Support and assessment of IP visiting faculty and adjuncts;

We do have responsibility over academics/curriculum, so this is our purview. We need to move beyond conjecture and get data on grades and real answers about them. Also, visiting faculty are part of us, we could do more to understand how they are being supported and how they are evaluated/quality control. Some might not be as answerable as we are (if they have been there a long time).

Non-faculty evaluations of IP exist and are useful:

- Assessment
- Seaver Dean's Review of Dean of International Programs. We received the surveys to contribute data.
- Dean Hall's self-assessment—he has answers to some of our questions, and we need to have conversations with him.

SFA Executive Committee Discussion:

- Still amassing data to ask the right questions
- Considering options to fulfill Seaver faculty's responsibility for curricular matters
- Possible next steps. We are considering possibilities for addressing these issues, still deciding which way to go and how to address the issues. We will likely do some combination of the following:
- Form an ad hoc committee
- Task current standing committees with specific tasks
- Work with Dean Hall to change the charter of the IP council to increase its role in curricular oversight. IP council won't solve this, but we could help it be more effective at communicating between Dean of IP and faculty.

Ron concluded the meeting by commending the hard work of SFA, noting that RTP is working hard, benefits and stipends, academic integrity, and many of our committees are working hard. We do a lot, we can be stronger, but what we do now makes a difference.

At 9:55 Adjourned!

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Rivas
SFA Secretary Treasurer