

Minutes, SFA meeting, October 15, 2014
8:30-10:00, PLC 125

Ron Cox opened the meeting at 8:37

Devotional: David Lemley shared a message from I John, learning to love.

Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes from the SFA meeting of April 26, 2014. Approved!

Resolution Presentation on Merit Pay Proposal, Revision of Faculty Handbook:

Ron asked Andy Yuengert, past president and member of the Ad Hoc Committee that shaped the proposal and refined it to introduce the resolution and provide background. The resolution calls for support of a proposed "Merit Salary System for Full-Time Faculty, and a revision to faculty handbook.

It was pointed out that footnote 2 is new and contradicts other work, so it will be dropped. It is not part of the proposal.

Andy summarized where we've been, noting that the merit pay proposal has been talked about in three SFA meetings. He briefly noted where it came from, what's in it, and how it's been modified based on conversations with faculty.

Resolution:

Whereas, the university administration has allocated funds for increased salary to Seaver Faculty by means of merit pay, and

Whereas, Seaver faculty should work together with the administration in distributing merit pay,

Resolved, that the Seaver Faculty Association supports the proposed "Merit Salary System for Full-time Faculty" revision to the Faculty Handbook

Genesis of Proposal: In Spring 2011, the administration allocated merit money 2%. Dean Marrs and Division Chairs initially intended to allocate it to base pay, but there was a reaction, and it seemed arbitrary and quick. So, Dean Marrs temporarily changed this allocation to a yearly bonus, and convened a committee to address merit. Disciplinary differentials and stipends also drive proposal. The stipend program gave stipends, but the business division still had trouble hiring even with them; so Dean Marrs was already paying over stipends in certain disciplines (and there was some language to do this) but he wanted to normalize this.

Merit Pay Committee was developed and worked from 2011-13

It included Marrs, Feltner, Semerau, Murrie, Clegg, Yunegert, Strong, Kilpatrick
Their task was to talk about the possibility and procedures for merit pay.

Concerns about merit pay that had emerged were: arbitrary across divisions, overemphasis on research (as at other schools, while we pay attention to teaching), and gender equity. The proposed alternative was to use RTP ratings. Faculty (not

just Dean and chairs would be involved in determination of merit; RTP weights on teaching, scholarship, service would help focus on teaching because system already weights teaching more than scholarship; gender equity (and other kinds) could be monitored more easily, since salary tied to RTP ratings.

The current proposal has two parts, determining initial salary, and steps, promotions and other reviews. Initial salary, is determined in line with current practice, with initial rank, but also includes disciplinary differentials; certain stipendiary or deviant disciplines get higher initial salary; everyone else would get the same base salary (if no previous experience, and have terminal degree, etc.) Review would be at the same time as current RTP process with addition of mid-associate review (only new one).

Andy showed charts with relevant review categories. These are categories 1-6. In history from 10 years, 58.9% get 1 or 2 and 73.3% get within the 1-3 categories (this is based on current five year review categories).

Andy observed that when planning, you always need to make adjustments with reality, and that this is normal. When you encounter reality there is always something you didn't consider/anticipate—and that is not alarming.

Andy showed a Salary Relevant Amounts Table that for categories 1-6 showed the percentage increase people would get at major promotions and pre-tenure and mid-associate reviews. It showed step increases at Professor rank. For other ranks, people who had received categories 1-5 would get 2% at step, and Category 6 would get 0%.

The transition would be in Fall 2015. New hires would immediately be under the new system. Other tenure track faculty would join at next promotion review and then join the new system.

Comparison to current system: There would be less salary discretion at steps (made by division chair and dean), and more discretion at RTP evaluations. Faculty Pay, those at category 1 and 2 (58.9%) would see increase over current system; those at category 3 nearly as much (14.4%) and earn nearly as much compared to current system. The amount of salary pool redistributed would be no more than 1.5% of salary pool redistributed 20 years into career, and any future money from administration goes to base.

Spring 2014 concerns were mostly related to: pre-tenure faculty, concern that non-stipend disciplines would be vulnerable, and need for a means to monitor gender (and other) equity. On gender equity, he noted that in ten years of historical RTP data, no evidence of gender differential in RTP ratings; and there would be a commitment to monitoring potential gender differentials in RTP going forward.

He elaborated on pre-tenure, noting as an example that someone's efforts to be experimental might be discouraged, and people might worry they would hurt my earnings for the future; this would be added to stresses of getting started and getting tenure. As a response to pre-tenure faculty, this proposal has reduced differentials at pre-tenure review and created a simulation of what that would result in. It shows they have reduced significantly the variation in salary increases at pre-tenure, so most will get 9% at pre-tenure review. He noted two scenarios for faculty performing below average pretenure and then does well after, and secondly, above average pretenure and at tenure then performs below average and noted the results, essentially the first would lag a little early on but generate higher earnings later in career. This person would do better than someone who starts well, then lags.

Spring 2014 concerns about distinctions among disciplines led to an affirmed commitment to equal salaries across non-stipend disciplines (in proposal, this is the section on base starting salary). Also, we have put into place annual meetings with Dean concerning starting salaries.

Spring 2014 concerns on gender have led to continued commitment to monitoring, but there is still work to be done on this issue. He is not sure exactly what those procedures will be. He noted language about "significant discrepancies" and said the committee to review these will be ad hoc committee created as needed. We would need to decide what counts as discrepancy, and there are issues of confidentiality and access. While there is work to be done and issues to be resolved, he said the SFA Executive Committee, the Committee on Women Faculty and the Dean are committed to ongoing work.

Open issues: Two options:

A) RTP conducts all reviews or B) RTP conducts all reviews except 5-year reviews, which are conducted by a new committee (one the SFA voted on that was never established). The Dean has said he supports relief time or stipend compensation for RTP in option A, but the details and timing are still to be worked out. The Dean couldn't find nine release times immediately without endangering other things.

DISCUSSION, led by Ron

Comment/Question: There was concern expressed about how Category 1 was described; the wording requires Outstanding in service or scholarship. If someone got Outstanding in Teaching they would still have to get outstanding in service or scholarship, not just two very goods. Could this be changed?

Ron reiterated that his role is not to champion the proposal but to facilitate a vote. That means not shutting down discussion, but facilitating it to make sure all are heard and then finding a way forward.

Andy answered the question: What does a No vote mean?

The members of SFA prefer the current method of distributing merit pay by the Dean in consultation with the Chairs, rather than the proposed method. Any current and future merit monies will be distributed to base salaries by decision of the Dean in consultation with division chairs. The Dean continues to argue strongly for increased salaries at Seaver. (Back to original system, but merit will go to base).

C/Q: It is still not clear if we have a voice or no voice. There are things we can anticipate, e.g., we know that merit pays tend to discriminate based on gender. A proposal from the committee on women faculty presented a proposal in May and nothing has been done on it. We were told this week that we couldn't implement any of our proposals we presented in May. Given that, how are we to be assured that changes can and will be made in the future? What would be process for changes in the future?

Ron apologized that while he did take the committee's recommendations to the Dean, he did not follow up and communicate quickly. He reiterated that changes could be made in the future. The Dean believes the proposal is inclusive of discrepancies. The Ad Hoc committee, the SFA Executive Committee, and the Dean's office would be able to work together to change the proposal as needed. Ron believes this is how shared governance works. We are making progress on shared governance (getting the mandated meeting with the Dean and SFA ExCom to talk about starting salaries, for example) and this proposal opens the door for regular, systematic conversations. We could say every variable has to be accounted for, but we need to decide if we can trust that we can come back and dialogue and make changes. Rather than being left out because the dean and chairs decide on merit pay, this gets us to the table.

Andy noted that if we vote no, which is okay with him (either way) the exact same concerns will be there in another way if the deans and chairs decide, and then we'd have to deal with same concerns such as equity, and without a process.

C/Q Will you clarify, that in way we are voting yes or no on whether chairs dean make decisions, what if we are in middle?

Ron: if you are in the middle, decide whether you want to use the proposal as basis for hammering out these things of you'd rather the system as has currently been done or continue negotiations.

C: Concern was expressed about wording on p. 1 that says pay will be merit pay. Is it possible all salary increases would be tied to this? This has major implications especially for full professor 3; if no other increases then even someone receiving top category would receive less than 1% increase per year; another issue, if this were to pass, would be there some sense that we have addressed the salary issue, rather than work at increasing the pie. Also has a concern that the category system seems illogical.

A: Cost of living increases is not codified in current system and can't be in a document. Cost of living increases do exist, but administrators don't want to be bound by those if university fell on hard times. As with the current scale system, the cost of living is totally separate from this. We have to continue to argue for and negotiate it.

C/Q: Why can't we fix things and then vote, why just yes or no? Like the problem with Category 1 (Teaching).

A: We can continue making changes, but then the discussion will go on for another year. If we go with the proposal now, then we don't have to start from ground zero; understanding from dean's office is that they are still willing to work with us on pieces of it; but they need to know if we want to get the proposal in place. They have to have budget stuff decided for next year soon. We need to decide if this is a good structure, and then we can make changes to it.

C: It is critical to get in writing what we want. Things to address include starting salary, fairness, collegiality might be hurt by competition, but he is most worried about starting salary. He fears bumping up initial salaries, but not ALL salaries, which means people could leapfrog people who have been there.

C: Merit pay doesn't work in public schools; it causes bad morale, invidious comparisons, etc.; if we accept this, we need to have the attitude that it won't be just/fair, and would need not to resent colleagues who get more.

C: Language matters; first reservation, first line, all salary increases are merit based, suggests no cost of living raises; second, p. 4, a review committee would be created if a significant discrepancy, should be struck; any discrepancies should be studied by an ad hoc committee. Also, a no vote on this is black and white, and it's really gray, maybe there's a muddy middle we can't work on this; we need to have more discussion of document..

C: A pre-tenured faculty noted concerns about limited options for merit pay and a vague sense that if we don't approve it something bad will happen. It seems like a great distraction from other issues that are important, like growing Seaver, poor pay for visiting and adjunct faculty, etc.

Ron noted the role of the board of trustees wanting a merit-based system, and that administrators are trying to get us more funds, recognizing that this is the world the trustees understand. He has tried to argue that we have a merit-based system; but that hasn't sold.

C/Q: Could we have a write in section for why we vote no? Also is concerned about the teaching being undervalued. Also thinks faculty should get to choose stipends or course reductions if on RTP committee.

C/Q: Merit pay is here; it is being distributed by chairs/Dean, but why is starting salary in the proposal? We want more say in merit pay's distribution, but to tie other things to it is a concern.

There was a request for comments in support of the proposal.

C: Involved in faculty governance for a long time, we've been really working to increase dialogue between administration and faculty, so faculty have a greater say; this is an example. This proposal came up because faculty objected to the way things were being done; it came from faculty and has been obsessed over for quite some time. Yes, the first category needs to say one outstanding and two very goods (to include teaching), but other than that, I'm hearing fear. It is scary to have more power, and it gives us more power. Are we saying we don't want more power? Are we afraid to take possession of something that's very important to us?

C: The Shared Governance Document is a great document; one the administration agreed to follow and it gives us a voice. WASC demanded it, and now we have it in writing. He doesn't agree with all wording of the Merit Pay Proposal and there are problems, but we shouldn't let go of this opportunity for shared governance. He also noted that Seaver is in a strong position, as other schools are running at deficit or just making it, so this is a good time to make progress.

C: On other side, he is concerned that some--40% of faculty—will get paid less. A category 3 gets tenure, so why shouldn't they get same salary they got before? This doesn't give us more power for negotiation; it gives us less, because we're saying we're going to agree that some of us aren't worth what we're getting paid now. We need to go together to say salary pool needs to be increased.

C/Q: On the issue of gender disparities, if we vote no, merit pay will continue to be distributed by chairs and deans, if yes, by rankings received by RTP; wouldn't it be better to vote yes, because we have more oversight to fix RTP than to fix chairs/dean? Which is better from point of gender disparity?

With time running out, Ron noted that he would send the ballot out with comment boxes, so people could explain their votes. Whatever the outcome, he'll do what he needs to help us go forward, because either way, there will be more work to do.

At 10:00 a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Adjourned!

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Rivas
SFA Secretary Treasurer