

**Annual Committee Report
Faculty Relations Committee
Faculty Senate of Texas Christian University
Academic Year 2016 - 2017**

Prepared by Andrew Ledbetter, Faculty Relations Committee Chair

Committee

Members of the committee were Kristi Argenbright, Art Busbey (FSEC liaison), Hayat Hokayem, Kevin Johnson, Max Krochmal (absent), Andrew Ledbetter (chair), Sally Packard (absent), David Preston, Patricia Walters, and Dan Williams.

According to the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate, the purpose of the Faculty Relations Committee (FRC) is to “monitor the effectiveness of University policies on tenure, promotion, and grievance, and serve as liaison with Human Relations on faculty benefits and Compensation” (http://www.fsn.tcu.edu/Constitution_Bylaws.pdf, p. 4). The remainder of this document describes our standing charges and specific charges for the academic year 2016-17, with accompanying description of the committee’s actions on each charge. The minutes for each meeting appear in Appendix A.

Standing Charges

1. Monitor the effectiveness of University policies on tenure, promotion and grievance as set forth in the Faculty and Staff Handbook.

In a sense, this standing charge served as an umbrella for at least three of our special charges. Our committee discussions addressed pertinent topics such as merit pay, the overall composition of the full-time TCU faculty regarding (non-)tenure status, and the role of service at TCU. When requested by the Senate Chair, we provided feedback on the possibility of creating an additional rank beyond full professor (e.g., “distinguished professor”). Although we think the idea is worth consideration, we would need more information before we would be comfortable supporting such a move. Specifically, we would like to see criteria for such recognition and an evaluation of whether the costs of such a policy would be worth the benefits of it (individually and institutionally).

2. Monitor the effectiveness and outcomes of faculty conflict resolution processes for ensuring due process.

We spoke about these concerns with Human Resources during the previous academic year and extant concerns seemed to have been resolved to our satisfaction. We did not pursue this matter further this year, but this is sufficiently important that I believe it should remain as a standing charge for the committee.

3. Consult with Human Resources on benefits and compensation.

The majority of our April meeting consisted of a face-to-face conversation with HR Vice Chancellor Yohna Chambers and Benefits Director Michelle Whiteley. Our conversation addressed the rising cost of health insurance premiums, the aging population of TCU employees, TCU's upcoming exit from the CARES consortium, and Affordable Care Act compliance. Overall, the conversation was informative and collegial.

One point of potential concern regarded disagreement between our committee and the HR administrators regarding how benefits are conceptualized, particularly regarding health insurance premiums. Human Resources seems to conceptualize much of the cost of health care premiums as a benefit paid for by TCU. We understand that the typical discourse used to describe benefits tempts toward this interpretation (e.g., "employer paid benefits"). However, the committee thinks this is, at best, a partial truth, as TCU does not pay for our health care for free; we exchange our labor in return for compensation, and "employer paid benefits" are part of the employee's overall compensation package. Next year, it may be worth discussing, and perhaps addressing, this difference in interpretive frames. The Senate has already clarified that any reductions to benefits should occur in close consultation with the faculty (<http://www.fsn.tcu.edu/resolutions/FacultySenateRes.pdf>, 5/2/13). It may be helpful to amend this resolution in some way to further indicate that benefits are rightfully conceptualized not only as paid by the university but, perhaps more importantly, as earned by the employee.

Special Charges

1. Serve as liaison with the Gender Equity Committee and keep the FS apprised of its findings.

On January 27, 2016, I wrote an e-mail to Fran Huckaby, who I understood to be chair of the Gender Equity Committee. I received an e-mail reply from her on April 5, 2017 (about 15 months later), asking if we could schedule a meeting. I replied the next day but have not heard back yet. Given that two years have now elapsed since receiving an update from this committee, FRC should pursue this more forcefully next year.

2. Across TCU's academic units, document differences in practice and experience regarding adjunct faculty.

We revisited survey data collected from adjunct faculty two five years ago. Although this data is not particularly new, neither is it particularly old, and we judged that using informative data on hand was a better choice than burdening TCU faculty (particularly part-time faculty) with a request for further information. Upon examination of the qualitative data, no particularly clear differences emerged among the Colleges, except office space concerns in Neeley which seemed to be a reaction to some kind of change immediately prior to the survey (and a situation likely to change further with upcoming construction in Neeley). We discussed the possibility of creating an award to recognize excellent adjunct teaching (and perhaps service?), and we think such an idea is worthy of further consideration.

3. Develop and recommend best practices for faculty evaluations and merit pay, particularly regarding university service.

We consulted with Jan Quesada and with our own Patricia Walters, both members of UCAC. We learned that UCAC has already pursued this issue and “beat us to the punch” as it were, recommending clarity in the merit raise process.

We have data regarding the role of service at TCU that is about five years old. Analysis of the quantitative data has revealed little to nothing in the way of significant findings. However, the qualitative data have revealed some themes that may be meaningful:

REWARD: Concern about the link between service and tenure, promotion, compensation, and merit pay.

CLARITY: Concern about a lack of written policies regarding service.

TYPE: Concern about the value of different types of service (university, national, external).

TRADE-OFFS: Concern about trade-offs between service and other responsibilities (such as teaching and research).

TRACK: Concerns about equity in evaluating tenure-track versus non-TT faculty.

RANK: Concern about protection (or not) of junior faculty from service.

GENDER: Concern about gender equity and service workload.

Best practices differ across units; for example, grant funding may be of utmost importance for research productivity in one College or department and of little consequence in another. Thus, as a committee we think it is beyond our purview to address specific recommendations to specific units. Likewise, it is beyond our purview to address individual personnel matters, and the qualitative survey data, as compelling as it may seem, appears to be mostly concerned with individual problems that are properly addressed at the level of a chair or dean. We also observe that the FRC has, in the past, spent much time considering service with no meaningful outcome nor an obvious path to one.

Although there is a general sense that service is undervalued at TCU, it may be administrative action that is needed to address that reality (or perception). In other words, we are not convinced that the FRC’s efforts will do much to change what appears to be, for better or worse, an element of our institutional culture.

4. Study the status of tenure at TCU. Identify an optimum proportion of tenured/tenure-track faculty within the entire faculty in view of the institution’s goals.

We investigated institutional and national data regarding faculty composition, student composition, and academic profile ranking. Extensive data and reports on this have been provided to the Senate and to the Academic Profile Committee. Appendix B contains the summary report offered to the latter.

Recommendations for Special Charges in 2017-18:

As the FRC Chair consults with FSEC regarding charges for the upcoming academic year, the following seem worthy of particular consideration:

- **Faculty-trustee relations.** We are grateful that members of FSEC informed trustee Matt Rose regarding the Senate’s resolution, passed November 5, 2015, calling for the reinstatement of the Faculty-Trustee Relations Committee. We hope that this will lead to a regular, systematic, direct, and meaningful means of communication between the TCU faculty and the Board. Our committee continues to believe that the omission of such a direct means of communication (a) is inconsistent with the “Culture of Connection” TCU aims to achieve, (b) creates unnecessary instability and potential for conflict in the face of future crises, and (c) threatens TCU’s commitment to shared governance. We also suspect that our current practice of limited contact with the Board is out of step with the practice of other highly-ranked private colleges and universities. Thus, it would be worthwhile to:

 - Identify the mechanisms of trustee-faculty contact at peer and aspirational institutions;
 - Evaluate the extent to which trustee-faculty contact is associated with the academic profile of these institutions; and
 - In lieu of a formal means of direct contact, encourage FSEC to seek another face-to-face meeting with the Board next year, with such a meeting serving as an occasion for conversation rather than a formal presentation.

- **Frequency of research (sabbatical) leave.** It has come to the attention of our committee that TCU’s Faculty Handbook indicates that research leaves should occur no more frequently than every eight years. This seems inconsistent with the practice of other institutions which provide research leave every seven years. It also seems that there are units at TCU that offer research leaves every seven years, whereas others adhere to the eight-year policy. The FRC could explore how to resolve this inconsistency of practice; moreover, given the importance of research leave to faculty research productivity (and, in turn, the institution’s academic profile), it would seem to be worthwhile to resolve this inconsistency in favor of seven years rather than eight. Although we realize the Provost’s time is valuable, he has visited our committee in the past, and this may be a matter of sufficient importance that it would be worthwhile to talk with him directly about this.

- **Adjunct faculty recognition.** The Senate has recommended increasing adjunct pay, but we perceive the TCU administration is unable and/or unwilling to do this. We understand financial realities are what they are, yet we also recognize adjunct faculty as a meaningful part of TCU’s workforce and, for many students, an influential component of their TCU education. Although adjunct faculty perform teaching and other duties, mechanisms for recognizing outstanding work are few; for example, adjunct faculty are ineligible for some major university awards. Establishing an award that recognizes adjunct faculty excellence could help incorporate adjunct faculty more meaningfully into the university community and function as an (albeit limited) method of increasing reward, recognition, and/or compensation.

- **Hiring of administrators in comparison to faculty.** During the past three years the FRC has collected much data about faculty composition and hiring. For example, we know that the proportion of full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty (versus non-tenurable full-time faculty) has fallen somewhat over the last ten years. However, this is only a partial picture of TCU's institutional practice regarding its workforce. Examining the rate and proportion of administrative hires would provide a fuller picture and may allow more informed and specific recommendations regarding composition of the TCU faculty.
- **Status of tenure at TCU.** This year we gathered data. The original intent of this data was to foster a broader conversation across the Senate. We are not certain that such conversation has yet taken place. It would be helpful to schedule a block of time large enough for the Senate to have an informed conversation about tenure that culminates in at least one or two actionable items aimed at maintaining and/or improving the experience of tenure at TCU.

Gratefully,

Andrew Ledbetter
Faculty Relations Chair 2016-2017

Appendix A: Meeting Minutes

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Agenda

September 8, 2016

3:30 – 5:00 PM

Moudy South 341

Members present: Kristi Argenbright, Art Busbey, Hayat Hokayem, Kevin Johnson, Andrew Ledbetter, David Preston, Dan Williams

1. We did member introductions, and generally discovered that committee members preferred games of economic or military conquest as kids.
2. We discussed our Special Charge to “Study the status of tenure at TCU. Identify an optimal proportion of tenured/tenure-track faculty within the entire faculty in view of the institution's goals.” Dan Williams agreed to lead our data-gathering for this charge. Our conversation revolved around philosophical concerns (e.g., how should tenure and research be associated? Do non-tenured professors have adequate academic freedom? How can we cultivate an atmosphere of inclusivity and open debate for all members of the TCU community?) and practical steps we will enact to collect data. For example, we intend to compare proportion of tenured and non-tenured faculty at TCU over the last five years, with other universities (Big XII universities and comparable/aspirant private universities). Dan and Kristi will work together to further refine questions to ask and data gathering strategies to answer them.
3. We discussed our Special Charge to “Develop and recommend best practices for faculty evaluations and merit pay, particularly regarding university service.” We affirmed the need for clarity (but also flexibility) in the process of determining merit pay. We also must try to avoid duplicating past Faculty Senate efforts, such as work already done on best practices for teaching evaluation. Practical next steps involve communication with the Provost about affirming the importance of service (Art), and communication with Pat Walters about UCAC’s conversation on merit pay (Andrew).
4. As our time wound down, we briefly discussed the matter of faculty relations with the Board of Trustees. The committee seems to think that this issue must remain on the Senate’s agenda. We noted that our resolution followed the Senate’s 1996 resolution calling for the Board to elect a faculty member. We need communication from the administration about these resolutions; even more generally, it would be helpful if the Provost would speak to the Senate about all resolutions passed within the last 2 years.
5. We adjourned at 4:45 PM.

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Agenda
October 13, 2016
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 341

Members present: Kristi Argenbright, Art Busbey, Hayat Hokayem, Andrew Ledbetter, David Preston

1. Discuss data obtained so far on the status of tenure at TCU, and plan next steps and timeline.

We examined data obtained from collegefactual.com and from Institutional Research. We concluded that TCU's ratio of full-time tenure-track to full-time non-TT faculty is comparable (if not better) to regional and peer institutions. The ratio also appeared to be fairly stable over time. We decided to contact FSEC about presenting these findings in a future Senate meeting.

2. Discuss UCAC conversations on best practices for faculty evaluations and merit pay

We discussed this briefly and plan to take it up more earnestly later in the year.

3. Adjournment

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Agenda
November 10, 2016
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 341

Members present: Art Busbey, Patricia Walters, Kevin Johnson, Dan Williams

1. Discuss data obtained so far on the status of tenure at TCU, in preparation for presentation to the Senate in December.

--There was a general agreement that the PowerPoint worked well with one slight exception. One slide 10, "Concluding Observations," the wording might be adjusted to clarify that the 2-1 or better proportion is an observation of current practice and not a recommendation. This would be to forestall a discussion about what is the ideal proportion of tenured/tenure-track versus non-tenurable faculty. Given that TCU is in line with many other schools, and that over the past decade the proportion has remained consistent, we did not think there was a cause for concern.

2. Discuss charge regarding best practices for faculty evaluations and merit pay.

--For a plan to move forward, we thought the first step would be to check to see what's being done currently in the colleges and to collect all documents (policy statements) related to faculty evaluation and merit pay, particularly regarding university service. These documents would then be discussed to see if recommendations should be made to amend current practises.

--We also thought that we should make use of the Faculty Senate's White Paper of 2011, "On the Evaluation of TCU Faculty Teaching," which has pertinent information and recommendations. This document was endorsed by the Faculty Senate and then approved and promoted by the Provost when it was forwarded to all deans and chairs.

--One recommendation we did think worthy of making at some point this year was to ask the administration to create a real pool of merit money over and above the usual 3.0 % or 3.5% pool. This new pool of merit pay should be abundant enough to offer faculty with exceptionally productive years increases of up to 10%. The difference between a merit raise of 3.3% and 3.0% is negligible.

3. Additional business

A couple of thoughts and observations that have come to my attention recently:

- Health Insurance Increases

--We actually thought the increase of 8% was not out of line compared to increases around the state, but we also thought it would be a good idea to have someone from HR again visit with the committee in the spring.

- Concerning adjuncts and the Core

--As a committee, we should again endorse the principle that the university should continue to make use of full-time faculty whenever possible, converting adjunct positions into Instructor and PPP lines.

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Agenda
December 8, 2016
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 341

Members present: Kristi Argenbright, Kevin Johnson, Andrew Ledbetter, David Preston, Patricia Walters

1. Debrief and further discussion regarding presentation of data on tenure and faculty composition.
 - We discussed the data and noted that part of the ambiguity here stems from lack of clarity regarding TCU's strategic plan (or, at least, it feels ambiguous to some committee members; it may not be ambiguous at higher levels of the institutional 'stratosphere'). TCU is odd that it is a private school with no professional school presence, and the med school seems to be addressing that difference, perhaps leading us to become like some of the more prestigious private schools. We decided to sit on the data for now, with the initial thought being that we will share the data with the Senate Exec and the ad hoc Research Committee in the early spring.
2. Discuss charge regarding best practices for faculty evaluations and merit pay
 - We talked about what UCAC is doing. We may want to let UCAC take the lead on this and support them as we have opportunity. So far no one has stepped forward and volunteered to take up the task of collecting and reviewing documents on faculty evaluation, but if somebody wants to, we can consider that data.
3. Looking ahead to next semester, discuss how we want to approach the matter of working conditions for adjunct faculty.
 - The committee is thinking of doing a survey to assess this.

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2017
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 203

Present: Hayat Hokayem, Kevin Johnson, Andrew Ledbetter, David Preston, Pat Walters, Dan Williams

1. Report on meeting with academic profile committee regarding tenure and faculty composition data.

We discussed Andrew's meeting with the academic profile meeting. Our discussion included consideration of the institution's goals, faculty/student composition, and the validity of various academic rankings. The overall sense of the committee seems to be that we have fulfilled this charge.

2. Discuss Board of Trustees retreat, including material we wish to send to the Board in the Senate report.

We wordsmithed the document. Andrew will prepare it and send it to Jesús, to be sent to the Provost, and then to the Board.

3. Discussion of possibility of meeting with Human Resources.

Pat indicated that the Chancellor had suggested to UCAC that cuts to retirement benefits might occur. Thus, we decided that arranging a meeting with HR to discuss current benefits and potential changes to them is warranted. Andrew agreed to contact them.

4. Strategize how to gather information about adjunct working conditions.

We considered ideas for types of working conditions we might target:

- Opportunities for interaction with members of the university community.
- Opportunities for recognition of outstanding work.
- Availability of resources (offices, computers, testing center).
- Experience of academic freedom.
- Representation on Faculty Senate.

Andrew agreed to examine the survey data we currently have to see if adjunct concerns differ by College. Dan agreed to draft an initial statement or resolution that (a) states that, insofar as possible, adjunct faculty should be included as members of the TCU community and (b) calls for greater recognition of excellent adjunct faculty teaching.

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2017
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 203

Members present: Art Busbey, Kevin Johnson, Andrew Ledbetter, Dan Williams

1. Report and discussion on adjunct data and statement of principle (30 min)

We discussed Andrew's analysis of the data, which broke out the qualitative survey results by College. No particularly clear differences emerged among the Colleges, except office space concerns in Neeley which seemed to be a reaction to some kind of decision immediately prior to the survey. We believe this fulfills our charge, and will report the completion of it in our annual report. Dan Williams is going to try to draft a resolution/statement of principle stating that adjuncts should be valued at TCU. We also discussed the possibility of recommending creation of an award recognizing adjunct teaching excellence.

2. Discuss "distinguished professor" rank idea (30 min)

We brainstormed several pros and cons:

Pros: Encourage research. Reward continued excellence. Additional things for professors to strive for. Potentially raise academic profile.

Con: Will it diminish academic freedom for lower ranks? Is it just an additional 'carrot' for professors to chase? What will be the cost? Are there other things we could do with the money that would be more effective in raising TCU's academic profile? Could we somehow recognize those who are noteworthy at the associate level? What are the criteria for awarding this? Is it a rank, or is it some other kind of honor? **What is the intention?** How many would receive it?

In the end, we think it is a topic worth investigating, but we have many questions, and answers to them would help determine whether we think this is a good move or not.

3. Plan for meeting with HR next time (15 min)

Areas of discussion:

- Any anticipated changes to benefits?
- Conflict resolution process?
- Medical benefits?
- How are the retirees? And their benefits? Transition to retirement.

TCU Faculty Relations Committee Meeting Agenda
April 13, 2017
3:30 – 5:00 PM
Moudy South 203

Members present: Art Busbey, Andrew Ledbetter, Pat Walters, David Preston, Kristi Argenbright, Dan Williams

1. Meeting with Vice Chancellor Yohna Chambers and Benefits Director Michelle Whiteley, Human Resources
 - They presented us with an update on the current status of benefits and compensation.
 - Health care choices are moving in the direction of responsible employee choices regarding the cost of care.
 - Enrollment in health insurance plans has increased.
 - We are leaving CARES in order to provide more flexibility and fiscal oversight.
 - TCU has a high level of ACA compliance.
 - We discussed the rising cost of premiums (looks like they will continue to go up) and the philosophy behind their cost (who is really paying—TCU or the employee?).

2. Discuss end-of-year report and priorities for next year (15 min)
 - Some ideas:
 - Examine association between academic profile and presence of faculty on Board of Trustees at nationally-ranked private schools?
 - Address frequency of research leaves (sabbaticals)?
 - Hiring frequency and amount of administrators? Why? How would this inform our understanding of faculty hiring practices over time?
 - Status of tenure overall?

Appendix B: Summary of Faculty Composition Report for Academic Profile Committee

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FACULTY COMPOSITION ANALYSIS Prepared by Andrew Ledbetter for the Faculty Senate's Academic Profile Committee January 27, 2017

The analysis over time suggests that TCU has experienced rapid growth, and has hired nearly equal numbers of T/TT and non-T/TT faculty. This has led to a reduction in the T/TT faculty ratio.

Somewhat different pictures emerge depending on the group of schools to which we compare TCU.

Comparing us to regional, conference, and Division I private schools:

- We have a comparable, if not better, T/TT faculty ratio.
- We rely considerably less on GTA labor.
- We rely more heavily on adjunct faculty labor.
- We have a somewhat low USNWR ranking (#82; $M = 66.1$)
 - Schools that rank better than TCU: Baylor (71), BYU (68), Syracuse (60), SMU (56), Texas (56), Miami (44), Tulane (39), Boston College (31), Wake Forest (27), USC (23), Emory (20), Vanderbilt (15), Notre Dame (15), Rice (15), Northwestern (12), Duke (8), Stanford (5).
 - Schools that rank lower than TCU: Tulsa (86), Iowa State (111), Oklahoma (111), Kansas (118), Kansas State (135), Oklahoma State (152), Texas Tech (176), West Virginia (183).
 - **Overall, then: We rank at the top of the Big XII (with the exception of Baylor and Texas), but at the bottom of private Division I football schools (with the exception of Tulsa).**

Comparing us to all USNWR-ranked private schools:

- We are an average size school by total student population and faculty size.
- But we are very undergraduate-heavy and very graduate-light.
- We have a worse student/faculty ratio.
- The T/TT faculty ratio is near the mean, but many schools do better.
- Schools which rank higher have:
 - Larger student populations, particularly of graduate students.
 - Larger faculty size (but not adjuncts).
 - Rely on GTA labor rather than adjunct faculty labor.
- A cluster analysis suggests three main tiers of private schools.
 - We rank near the top of tier #3, with schools like Baylor, DePaul, Marquette, and Saint Louis University.
 - We would rank near the bottom of tier #2 (18 of 25), with schools like Boston College, George Washington, Pepperdine, and Tulane.
 - We would rank very poorly in comparison to the tier #1 schools, such as Carnegie Mellon, Notre Dame, SMU, University of Chicago, Vanderbilt, and the Ivy League.