COMMITTEE: Faculty Welfare Committee

MEETING DATE: March 15 @ 3:30 pm

PERSON PRESIDING: Ken Ferguson

REGULAR MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Ken Ferguson
Amanda Klein
Rachel Roper

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Linda Ingalls
Deedee Glascoff
Susan Simpson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Lori Lee
Michelle Morris (on behalf of John Toller)
Amy Waters
Kitty Wetherington

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ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item:
Vote on minutes from previous meeting, 2/9/12

Action Taken:
Not enough members present to vote

Assigned additional duties to:
Will vote at next meeting

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Agenda Item:
Faculty and Domestic Partner Hiring Standard Operating Procedure

Discussion:
The discussion of this important document took up almost all of our 90 minute meeting and I will attempt to summarize the conversation and the main points that were raised during this conversation, as well as how they were resolved. To transcribe the entire 90 minute discussion, which was often circular in nature, is impossible, so these are just the highlights:

* Rachel Roper began the conversation by asking if the phrase “In addition, this is a friendly family policy” should be added to the “Introduction” section of the SOP. The committee agreed that this phrase should be inserted.

* The committee members discussed adding an additional phrase concerning gender but decided it was not necessary as the document adequately addresses this item.

* Next Amy Waters, the director for Harassment and Discrimination Prevention and Resolution from the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Relations, addressed the fact that we must make sure this
SOP and its revisions do not contradict her office’s current policies. Kitty Wetherington and Amy Waters stated that they did not want to impede spousal hires, but wanted to facilitate them.

*Ken Ferguson brought up that on May 1, NC voters will be asked to vote on Amendment One, which is to add this sentence to the NC constitution “Constitutional amendment to provide that marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State.” If this amendment passes, would our SOP then be considered “illegal”?

*This then led to the discussion of the following questions: How are we defining the term ‘Domestic Partner’? Do we need to clearly define this term in order to include it in the language of the SOP? Where else (i.e., in what other documents) must we define this term? How do we establish “proof” of a domestic partnership?

*the UNC General Administration came up with a useful document that clearly outlines what a Domestic Partner is, and I am quoting it below:

**Section 2 – Domestic Partnership Requirements**

We certify that:

. 1.) we have an exclusive mutual commitment to share responsibility for each other’s welfare and financial obligations which has existed for at least 12 months prior to the enrollment in the plans listed in Section 1 and which commitment is expected to last indefinitely;

. 2.) we have lived together in the same residence for at least the last 12 months prior to the enrollment of the plans listed in Section 1;

. 3.) we are each 18 years of age or older;

. 4.) neither of us is married;

. 5.) we are not related by blood in a manner that would bar our marriage in the state of ________________, the state in which we reside; and

. 6.) neither of us has had another domestic partner within 12 months prior to the enrollment in the plan listed in Section 1.

*the committee agreed that this definition was useful but questioned whether we could ask for “evidence of joint responsibility for basic financial obligations” as the UNC document requests in order to provide health insurance to domestic partner hires

*there were concerns regarding placement of such documents in a new hire’s personnel file, which could create risk for complaints regarding future employment decisions

*another issue that was raised: how does it impact morale when people know they’ve been hired due to a spousal/domestic partnership hire?

*the answer to this concern is: spousal/domestic partner hires must meet the specifications of the department that hires them

*don’t hire someone who is wholly unqualified for the position as this will hurt the department that hires this person and eventually, the morale of the person hired

*as the discussion progressed, Kitty Wetherington questioned whether the SOP needed the addition of #4. Here is the text:

“If an individual is a recommended finalist for a position and the applicant’s spouse or domestic partner desires University employment, and the University has an available position for which the spouse or domestic partner is qualified, a waiver of advertising for the second
position must be obtained from the director of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Relations.”

*Ken Ferguson and Amanda Klein both argued that deleting #4 would negate the entire purpose of this SOP. Why hold a nationwide search (and spend the money, waste the time of the department doing the hiring and the time of the candidates who are brought to campus) if the outcome is predetermined?
*Rachel Roper added here that 36% of faculty have academic spouses and so this is an issue that does need to be addressed. It affects our ability to hire the best candidates and bring them to Greenville and it also impacts our ability to retain top faculty (if another university offers a spousal hire and we do not)

*the committee agreed that we would like to keep #4 in the SOP and add the following language:
“an available position for which the spouse or domestic partner is qualified, a waiver of advertising for the second position must be obtained from the director of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Relations and from the Department of Human Resources”

**Action Taken:**
The committee could not formally vote on the changes to this document since we did not have enough people present

**Agenda Item:**
Safety e-mails

**Discussion:**
Ken Ferguson added the following language to the safety e-mails:
“The information in this email is advisory only and is not intended to burden the faculty with any obligations beyond those that may be required by policies already in place.”

**Action Taken:**
The committee agreed that Ken’s language absolved faculty of any obligation or liability and made it clear that these e-mails are suggestions only.

**NEXT MEETING:** April 12 2012 @ 3:30pm

**ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED:** Behavioral Concerns memo; Continuing discussions of Faculty and Domestic Partner Hiring Standard Operation Procedure