CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, HAYWARD
FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Approved as Corrected

Minutes of Meeting of February 7, 2001

Members Present: Hadi Bazad, Judy Clarence, Julie Glass, Kathy Hann, Valerie Helgren-Lempesis, Scott Stine (recorder), Vincenzo Traversa (Chair), Bruce Trumbo

Members Absent: Dee Andrews, Shyam Kamath

The meeting was called to order at 2:45 PM. Vincenzo Traversa announced that at 3:00 PM Mr. Mack Lovett would join the committee for a discussion of the proposed procedures to deal with non-academic-related student complaints.

1. Approval of the agenda:
   A motion to approve the agenda passed unanimously.

2. Approval of the minutes of November 15, 2000:
   A motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

3. Report of the Chair:
   Because just one week had passed since the prior FAC meeting, the Chair had no new information to report.

4. Report of the Director of Faculty Development:
   Because just one week had passed since the prior FAC meeting, the Director of Faculty Development had no new information to report.

5. Old Business--Non-Academic-Related Student Complaints:
   According to a memorandum from Emily Stoper dated 11/27/00, the ExCom has proposed a new policy for dealing with non-academic-related complaints about faculty members by students. This policy would require that department chairs listen to the point of view of both the student and the faculty member about whom the complaint is made. Both parties, as well as the chair, would then have the opportunity to present their points of view in writing on a form, which would be forwarded to the Dean. The Dean would then decide what action should be taken.

   Included on Professor Stoper’s memorandum were several paragraphs of background information which, like the proposal itself, stimulated a lengthy, wide-ranging, and at times free-wheeling discussion, a portion of which was joined by Mack Lovett.

   Questions immediately arose concerning the nature of the complaints that this newly proposed policy is intended to address. Background provided in the Stoper memorandum suggested that it includes rudeness, negligence, and other types of untoward behavior by faculty. Several members bristled at the nebulosity of such terms, and at the idea that a
bureaucracy, complete with forms, would be instituted to deal with complex, personal issues. One member felt that instituting a formal policy against these ill-defined concepts could encourage trivial complaints. Another lamented the decline of classroom civility and manners (use of cell phones, consumption of food, tardiness, etc.), and the increased need for disciplinary measures, that have occurred over the past years. He pointed out that the need to maintain classroom order can itself induce student disgruntlement, putting all instructors, but especially lecturers and untenured faculty, under real pressure to balance discipline with the threat of complaints—complaints that, even when unwarranted, have the potential to negatively impact careers.

Professor Hann and Mr. Lovett noted that there is a long history to this issue: Hann was part of an attempt to resolve it 2-3 years ago; Lovett has asked over the past five years that it be resolved.

Mr. Lovett provided further background and guidance. According to him, complaints related to discrimination and sexual harassment are handled by the Equal Opportunity Office; those related to academic matters are supposed to be addressed along the following pathway: Student → Chair → Dean → Assistant Vice President for Instructional Services → Fairness Committee. His primary concern now is that there be a procedure in place to deal with non-academic, non-discrimination issues.

There was general agreement that a) a procedure of some type should be in place; b) such a procedure should not involve the use of a form; and c) the pathway should not ultimately lead to the Fairness Committee, but rather to an Ombudsman who, working alone rather than by committee, would be better able to maintain confidentiality.

There evolved a consensus that Stine should fashion a motion that incorporates the points of agreement discussed above, and that the motion should be voted on at the FAC meeting scheduled for February 21, 2001.

A motion to adjourn (Clarence/Hann) passed unanimously at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Stine, Recorder