



FACULTY SENATE

Research, Scholarship & the Creative Arts Committee

April 8, 2021

12:30-2:00

Microsoft Teams

Present: Mildred Beltre (CAS, Fine Arts Rep), Brandon Bensel (Postdoctoral Association), Vicki Brennan (CAS), Christopher Burns (Faculty Senate President), Mary Cushman (LCOM), Katie Gough (CAS), Rachelle Gould (RSENR), Britt Holmén (CEMS), Micah Hundley (GSS), Dimitry Kremontsov (CNHS), Christie Silkotch (LIB), Daniel Weiss (LCOM), Chun Zhang (GSB)

Absent: Tammy Kolbe (CESS), Jill Preston* (CALs), Vacant (SGA)

Guests: Cindy Forehand

Chair Cushman called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm via Microsoft Teams.

- 1. Approval of the Minutes.** The minutes of March 2021 were approved as written.
- 2. RSCA Election Update.** An e-mail was sent to the committee for asking for nominations for chair or co-chair for the 2021/ 2022 term. The nomination period will close tomorrow and the Faculty Senate Office will run an electronic election. Katie, Tammy and Britt all have terms that are up on June 30th. Elections are being conducted in the colleges to fill these positions.

- 3. Graduate College Update, Dean Cindy Forehand.**

Updates to Post Doc Fellows & Associates

- Post Doctoral Fellows
 - Paid in PeopleSoft as Independent Contractors
 - Employee files taxes quarterly
 - Employee pays medical / dental post tax
 - No benefit rate applied to stipends to collect employer cost for health insurance
 - Dean Office pays employer benefit premium for those that elect medical / dental
 - Looks like they “lose benefits” if the transition from PDA to PDG position
 - Retroactive changes are problematic

- Post Doctoral Associates
 - Employees
 - Receive limited benefits compared to faculty and staff
 - Full-time employee benefit rate 46% is used.

Compliance Requirements Impact

- Post Doc Fellows classified by DOL as employees
 - Taxes & benefits will be deducted via payroll
 - UVM will have to account / pay for taxes & benefit premiums
 - PDF will no longer have to file quarterly taxes
 - PDF will no longer be billed for benefits
 - NIH moving from “student stipend” to “wage”
 - Salary will have to meet FLSA tests
- Cover Post Doc Fellows under worker’s compensation insurance

Proposed Updates-Post Doc Fellows

- Post Doc Fellows transfer to employees in the same employee class as Post Doc Associates
- Post Doc Fellows receive the same benefits as Post Doc Associates
 - Add LTD, Tuition Remission, RHSP, Sick / Personal Time
 - They perform the similar body of work but on different grants, we want to encourage fellowships.
- Post Doc Employees + Post Doc Associates and Post Doc Fellows

Graduate Stipends, Benefits and Costs

- Housing is a major issue
- Cost of living
- Oklahoma State University Data set as a benchmark.
- Future consideration
 - 12-month doctoral stipends equivalent living wage of a full-time worker Living Wage- the minimum after tax income required to meet the minimum needs in a particular community (livingwage.mit.edu)
 - Chittenden County 2020 Living Wage \$28,899 -based on a single person, 2080 hrs./ year.
 - FY21 Minimum 12-month doctoral stipend is \$27,377
 - FY21 Minimum 1-month master’s stipend is \$22,233

For more information on stipends, you can visit the UVM SPA website at <https://www.uvm.edu/spa>

4. Update on the Academic Freedom Policy. The subcommittee has worked on updating the policy. They will share the policy with United Academics and Provost’s Office before the RSCA votes on it. The April Faculty Senate agenda is very full so the goal would for this to be presented to the Faculty Senate in May.

5. Humanities Research.

THE PROBLEM:

Challenges faced by Humanities Faculty (and also to some extent by Creative & Performing Arts Faculty) include time, space and funding issues:

Time:

- Humanities based research is time intensive: it requires extended periods for reading, thinking, and writing. Most humanities research is single-authored, and output consists mainly of book-length monographs. The same is true for many faculty in the creative arts; desired outputs consist of solo performances, exhibitions, installations, and so on.
- Humanities faculty teach primarily undergraduate classes, on a 3-2 load. They have no teaching assistants so preparation and grading are handled by professors. Many creative arts faculty--especially those who teach studio arts--experience this time crunch even more so due to the hands-on, one-on-one aspects of studio or applied arts pedagogy.
- Because of course scheduling it is very difficult to take time away during the fall-spring semester to devote to research and/or creative activities. Most research happens during breaks and summers (when faculty are off contract). But summer is NOT always the best time to complete or schedule research travel, writing, and/or performances and installations.

Space:

- Humanities faculty do not have labs; their research often takes place off campus or outside of the usual spaces on campus.
- Humanities faculty research often requires travel to field sites, archives, libraries, events, etc.
- Library resources are limited for most researchers in the humanities, particularly for faculty who work with non-English sources or other specialized materials. We do not have a "research library" for humanities research; instead we have an undergraduate-focused collection. In addition, the Howe Library does not currently have a Humanities Librarian (Pat Mardeusz retired in December 2020) nor are there plans to hire one.
- There are limited spaces and tools available for humanities researchers to use to help facilitate their research.

Funding:

- External funding for Humanities and Creative Arts research is limited. Most researchers in these fields are reliant on internal funding or if external funds are available they only cover a portion of expenses. Many faculty pay research expenses out of pocket in order to complete projects.
- Humanities and Creative Arts faculty do not receive start up funds to the same extent that other researchers at UVM do.

POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

1. **Increase awareness and support** of humanities/creative arts (H/CA) faculty and their research at all levels across UVM — students, faculty, administrators, Trustees.
 - a. Increase understanding of what humanities research is and how research needs differ from lab-based faculty with graduate assistants.
 - b. Better media coverage of humanities/creative arts research across all forms of University Communications (show case in Alumni [IMPACT] and other publications, UVM Today bulletins, web pages, news items, etc.).
2. **Targeted resource allocation** to increase humanities inclusion of H/CA in all broader research initiatives (i.e., "Amplifying Our Impact" distinctive strengths – Healthy Societies/Healthy Environment).
 - a. Augmenting humanities faculty research can help stimulate interest from external stakeholders and possibly also increase transdisciplinary research grant success rates.

3. **Grantmaking.** More support for external grant-seeking, grant-writing, and better attention to grant administration — often the funders are not like NIH, NSF, etc. having unique requirements (i.e., cost-share).
4. **Evaluate equity** in terms of campus resources allocation for humanities/creative arts vs. lab-based-science/other researchers. This includes examination of past internal funding awards. (Perhaps metrics need to be developed? a survey?)
5. **Increase research facilities support** (toward the R1 goal):
 - a. Significantly increase library (including staff) and research technology resources available to H/CA faculty.
 - b. Work with Humanities Center to create a Research Support Network/Hub for making available funding, resources, technologies, etc. so that scholars can share ideas and information across disciplines and other institutional divisions.
 - c. Invest in creation of a “Creative Scholars Lab” to provide faculty (and their new graduate students) the needed resources to successfully carry out their research. This could include: high powered scanners, monitors, recording equipment, media conversion, or other equipment used in document preservation and to organize materials. There should be opportunities for scholars to learn about and train on new tools and technologies for organizing, preserving and otherwise working with research materials.
6. **Consider** creating new multi-year accounting of faculty teaching load -- “**flex teaching**” (as part of restructuring?) — an optional summer teaching semester, covered by all the usual AY faculty benefits, to enable H/CA faculty to conduct necessary research travel at other times of year (during AY).

This will be an ongoing discussion for the RSCA. It will be added to the May agenda to discuss specific resolutions or actions that can be taken by the RSCA. Dean Geffert is a scheduled guest at next month’s meeting, it is a good opportunity to include him in this conversation.

6. Old or New Business.

7. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 2:07 pm.

*Sabbatical

The next meeting of the RSCA will take place on Thursday, May 13th at 12:30 on Microsoft Teams.