

**Minutes of the Faculty Affairs Committee
Meeting of November 12, 2007**

Present: Norma Cook; Joan Heminway, Chair; Virginia Kupritz; Norman Magden; Julia Malia; Neal Shover; Steve Thomas; and Gary Ubben. Susan Martin, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, also was present, at the request of the Chair.

The agenda was circulated in advance of the meeting, and the committee met in the Faculty Lounge of the Law School. The meeting commenced at approximately 1:35 pm.

Unfinished Business

The Committee approved the minutes of the October 15, 2007 meeting by unanimous vote of those present.

Steve Thomas then briefly described the status of his work on the unit bylaw posting project and distributed a typewritten summary of the information he had received to date. A brief discussion ensued. The Chair commended him for his progress in assembling information and requested that he report out again at the next meeting of the Committee.

Joan Heminway then summarized her proposal, earlier circulated in a memorandum to the Committee, regarding the addition of sexual orientation to the nondiscrimination statement in the *Faculty Handbook*. An extended discussion followed. Norma Cook offered a friendly amendment to the text proposed by Heminway based on a policy already in effect at the University of Memphis. Cook circulated a copy of the University of Memphis policy for review by the Committee. [Drafter's note: the policy is available at <http://policies.memphis.edu/12a1205.html>.] Members of the Committee agreed to review the University of Memphis policy in advance of the Committee's next meeting and be prepared to discuss it in the context of Heminway's proposal at that next meeting. Susan Martin agreed to ask the Provost to review and comment on the language included in the University of Memphis policy.

Heminway then summarized her proposal, earlier circulated in a memorandum to the Committee, regarding the addition of language to the *Faculty Handbook* defining and stating approval requirements for unit bylaws. The Committee discussed the proposed language and raised various questions about its content and complexity. After some discussion, members of the Committee agreed to consider possible revisions to Heminway's proposed text and send any comments or proposed revisions to Heminway in advance of the Committee's next meeting. Heminway suggested that any language adopted also should be reviewed for inclusion in the *Manual for Faculty Evaluation*.

New Proposed *Faculty Handbook* and *Manual for Faculty Evaluation* Changes

Heminway next called for a discussion of possible means of altering the qualifications for and role of ombudspersons as described in Section 5.2 of the *Faculty Handbook*. The description in the *Faculty Handbook* calls for three faculty members to serve as ombudspersons and establishes the nature of their conflict-resolution role in matters involving faculty. Heminway asked for committee members to reflect on the information included in Scott Simmons's October 4th memorandum on ombudspersons at peer and comparable institutions (which had been circulated in advance of the October meeting of the Committee). Heminway mentioned that it is the consensus of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that a professional ombudsperson (perhaps a trained mediator), hired for the role from outside the administration and faculty of the University, may be desirable. The Committee noted, however, that a person retained for this position should have some familiarity not only with conflict resolution but also with academic policies and affairs (at The University of Tennessee or elsewhere). Members of the Committee asked about the availability and utility of training for ombudspersons. Julia Malia, as a current ombudsperson, offered that training is available and valuable, but that it is not a substitute for relevant experience. In light of the time and the unavailability of the other recently serving faculty ombudspersons for this meeting, Heminway proposed postponing further discussion on revisions to Section 5.2 of the *Faculty Handbook* until the Committee's next meeting (with the hope that all three ombudspersons can make themselves available). Heminway expressed her desire that the Committee propose specific language changes to Section 5.2 of the *Faculty Handbook* at that meeting.

In the few remaining minutes of the meeting, at Heminway's request, Martin summarized problems with the current system of evaluating and reappointing Department Heads under Section 1.4 of the *Faculty Handbook*. Martin also put the Committee on notice that the Provost's office desires to formalize the evaluation process for probationary faculty. These matters will await further discussion at a future meeting of the Committee, perhaps after the first of the year.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Heminway