**The Faculty Matters Committee Annual Report**

Faculty Senate Annual Review Report: AY 2023-2024

Date: 4/16/2024

**Committee Charge (revised by the Faculty Senate on February 28, 2024)**

The Faculty Matters committee champions the general welfare, professional growth, pecuniary interests, equitable workload distribution, and fair performance evaluations for all faculty. The Committee shall be responsible for collaborating—with other University committees as appropriate—in interpreting, formulating, and recommending University-wide standards and policies on faculty matters, including but not limited to the following:

1. Initial appointments, rank, renewals, reappointment, tenure and promotion;
2. Salaries, stipends, and contract length;
3. Study and professional development leaves
4. Benefits, broadly defined, including health and retirement;
5. Workload policies related to research, teaching, and service activities;
6. Evaluation of faculty performance;
7. Academic Freedom;
8. Initiating revisions to Faculty Handbook on existing or new policies related to faculty.

**Committee Members**

* [Lisa Lister](https://english.gmu.edu/people/llister1) (CHSS)
* [Anna Pollack](https://publichealth.gmu.edu/profiles/apollac2) (CPH)
* [Ellen Rowe](https://cehd.gmu.edu/people/faculty/erowe/) (CEHD)
* [Solon Simmons](https://carterschool.gmu.edu/profiles/ssimmon5), Co-chair (Carter School)
* [Mohan Venigalla](https://volgenau.gmu.edu/profiles/mvenigal), Co-chair (CEC)

**Meeting Schedule**

The Faculty Matters Committee met five times during the AY 2023-2024 (9/15/23, 10/30/23, 12/11/23, 1/17/24, and 2/27/24). At the time of this report, we plan to meet for one more time in late April.

**Major Accomplishments, Initiatives & Updates**

Faculty Evaluation of Administrators.

* In AY 2022-2023, in coordination with the administration, the FMC collaborated with a global analytics company (Gallup) to administer the annual survey on Faculty Evaluation of Administrators (FEA). This partnership has made the process very efficient and may have increased faculty participation. The results of the AY 23 FEA survey were published in early fall.
* At the beginning of the AY 2023-2024, the budget situation created a degree of uncertainty regarding the continuation of the partnership with Gallup in conducting the FEA survey. However, the administration recognized the value of the partnership and supported the effort for this AY.
* Faculty feedback on department chairs and supervisors is an important data point to the administrators, faculty and to the chairs themselves about the performance of chairs and perceptions about them. For many years, the FMC considered including the evaluation of department chairs (and/or faculty supervisors) in the annual FEA surveys. However, due to the labor-intensive nature of synthesizing the survey results, the initiative was never pursued.
* In AY 22-23, we started a conversation with the administration on including the evaluation of department chairs (or faculty supervisors) in the Gallup-administered FEA survey. We continued that conversation in AY 23-24. In November and February, the FMC co-chairs made presentations to, and sought input from the Chairs’ Forum on the survey questions.
* Thus, for the first time in Mason’s history the AY 2023-24 FEA survey includes questions that will provide feedback on department chairs and faculty supervisors. This year the FEA survey is administered along with the biennial Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey (currently in Progress).

Dialogue on a New Leadership Track for Promotion, a Mason Innovation

* The Mason Innovation Commission report (Spring 2021) recommended the following (under Innovation #5):
  + Create a “leadership track” (i.e., genuine excellence in leadership) for promotion to full professor to facilitate the cultivation of effective senior academic leaders at Mason.
  + Ensure that descriptions of these efforts focus on the intrinsic value of the work (rather than declaring simply that candidates should not be penalized for that work).
* The FMC embraced this innovative idea, created a conceptual framework (see Appendix A) for the track and discussed it in detail with the following constituents and stakeholders.
  + Faculty Senate Executive Committee
  + The Provost Office (Keith Renshaw, Kim Eby)
  + The Faculty Handbook Committee
  + The Dean’s Council
* Owing to the importance of incumbent provost’s embrace of the track, in late February we decided to table this idea for this AY and rekindle the dialogue in the next AY.

Identifying Major Concerns of the Faculty at Large

* Identifying major issues and concerns faced by the faculty and addressing them at the policy level is a priority for the FMC. However, currently there is no mechanism in place to accomplish this on a regular basis. One solution would be to survey the faculty. We believe that a better alternative is to reach out to the newly created Ombudsperson and identify those issues and concerns.
* In February, the committee co-chairs met with the Ombudsperson, Ms. Kimberly Davidson. In general terms, she discussed some of the major issues and concerns faced by faculty members during the interactions her office had with the faculty members.
* General trends among the faculty seeking Ombuds office help include:
  + More tenured faculty than term faculty reach out to Ombuds;
  + Visitors tend to be of older demographic;
  + Most of them are Caucasian (relatively fewer are colored);
  + Dominating sentiments: lack of knowledge, lack of trust, or fear (about / of the system, people in authority)
* Of major concern are Issues related to health and disability (ADA / FMLA)
  + Those who took sick leave or FMLA time-off feel that the workload policies are inconsiderate to their genuine gap(s);
  + Workload and annual evaluation policies should be flexible in this regard;
  + A noticeable feeling among faculty: age discrimination;
  + Ombuds recommends the FMC to engage with HR / DEI offices as well.
* The FMC is currently formulating a strategy to turn this and other input into developing policy recommendations that will be brought to the attention of the Faculty Handbook Committee.

Updates

* The FMC was originally planning to advance conversation about continuous contracts for term faculty (also a priority identified in the Mason Innovation Report) in the upcoming academic year. However, due to the issue’s natural synergy with the Term Faculty Committee’s (TFC) charge, the FMC recommends that the TFC should take the lead on this issue.
* Per the direction of the Senate Executive Committee, the FMC has revised its charge, which is approved by the Senate on February 28 (see at the beginning of this report).
* The committee received queries from the faculty members seeking advice or a resolution about their individual situations. We referred them to appropriate forums.
* We had a cordial discussion with the Faculty Senate Executive members of James Madison University regarding the processes by which FEA surveys are executed at Mason.

**Responses to Questions from Faculty Senate Executive Committee**

During the past calendar year has the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President (or their respective offices) announced initiatives or goals or acted upon issues that fall under the charge of your Committee? If so, was your Committee consulted by the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President in a timely manner before the announcement or action? If not, do you believe your Committee should have been consulted? Would it have been helpful to have had the input of your Committee from the outset?

* Not applicable

Did your Committee seek information or input from the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President or members of their staffs? If so, did they respond adequately and in a timely manner?

* The committee requested the following meetings and, in all cases, the respective offices of the administration responded promptly and facilitated presentations and/or discussions by the committee co-chairs with stakeholders.
  + Meetings with Senior VP (Deb Dickerson)
  + Meeting with Keith Renshaw to discuss the framework and language pertaining to the new promotion track: Genuine Excellence in Leadership
  + Meetings with Chair’s Forum to present the details of annual evaluation of chairs through the annual survey on “Faculty Evaluation of Administrators”

Please suggest how you believe the President, Provost, Senior Vice President and/or their staffs might more effectively interact with your Committee in the future, if necessary.

* The FMC is looking forward to actively engaging with the new provost and advancing faculty interests in the coming AY.

Please relate any additional information you may have regarding interactions between your Committee and the President, Provost, Senior Vice President, or their staff.

* N/A

**Appendix A: Concept Memo**

**Promotion to Full Professor based on Genuine Excellence in Leadership**

Date: 1/31/2024

To: The Deans Council

From: Solon Simmons, Mohan Venigalla – Co-chairs, The Faculty Matters Committee

Subject: A proposal on developing a ‘Leadership Track’ for promotion to full professor (tenured line)

**Genesis**:

The justification for the ‘Leadership Track’ for promotion to full professors is rooted in Section 2.4.3. of the FHB, which states:

“Service, which may include leadership responsibilities, is demonstrated by faculty participation in governance, and operational or development activities in the local academic unit, the University, or the profession…..Leadership is demonstrated by making significant and consequential contributions to the local academic unit, the University, professional societies and associations, and local/regional/national/international communities. Examples include, but are not limited to, chairing or co-chairing committees for the local academic unit; leading and/or actively contributing to university-wide initiatives; …”

**What Constitutes ‘Leadership’?**

Advancing institutional goals and its mission through *Significant* (quantity), *Consequential* (quality / impact), and *Sustained* (long duration) contributions through institutional decision-making and governance.

**The Need for the Track**:

Tenured associate professors are often tapped for leadership roles because they are good at what they do and even excel in those roles and help advance the University Mission. However, this comes at a personal cost to them as they will not be able to pursue research or teaching at a pace that is required to advance themselves to the rank of full professor based on genuine excellence in research and/or genuine excellence in teaching. Based on the reporting structure, these faculty members can be grouped in three different categories:

1. Central administration (w provost)
2. College-level administration (w deans)
3. Faculty Senate, university standing committees, due process forums such as grievance committee, UPTRAC, HR Panels (often confidential)   
   (important: serving on many committees does not necessarily qualify for leadership)

One example: An Associate Professor who was serving in a leadership role for many years in Law School was hired at another institute for a leadership role at the rank of full professor. This example was pointed out by a committee member at the recent meeting of the University Faculty Roles and Rewards Committee. Such loss of talent could be prevented by effectively using this track.

**Recognition of the Need**:

The Mason Innovation Commission report (Spring 2021) recommended the following (under Innovation #5):

* Create a “leadership track” (i.e., genuine excellence in leadership) for promotion to full professor to facilitate the cultivation of effective senior academic leaders at Mason.
* Ensure that descriptions of these efforts focus on the intrinsic value of the work (rather than declaring simply that candidates should not be penalized for that work).

**Proposed Framework by the FMC**:

The framework and salient steps we envision for creating the new track on GE in Leadership are as follows:

1. **Create** the track.
   1. Relevant FHB section(s): 2.4
   2. Simple change in language
2. **Define** institutional leadership.
   1. Relevant FHB section(s): 2.4.3
   2. Must differentiate institutional leadership from leadership in service to the profession or leadership in teaching (which is already a part of the criteria for GE in research and/or GE in teaching).
      1. Key words: significant, consequential and sustained (for scale, impact and for a considerable period) contributions
   3. Rename 2.4.3 Service to 2.4.3 Service and Leadership and split it into two subsections.
      1. 2.4.3.1 Service
      2. 2.4.3.2 Institutional Leadership (these definitions form the basis for GE in Leadership)
3. **Outline the evaluation criteria:**
   1. Relevant FHB section(s): 2.5,
      1. insert 2.5.3 Institutional Leadership.
      2. change the section #, current 2.5.3 Service to 2.5.4 Service
   2. 2.5.3 Institutional Leadership (systemic evaluation)
      1. Needs at least high competence in research or teaching.
4. **Outline the Process**: proposing modifications to the process (Section 2.7.3.2) for the GE in Leadership. (Similar to process on GE in Teaching, language points to **Provost guidance**, which is step 5 below.)
   * 1. 1st level review – no change. The process begins at LAU / department level.
     2. Chair’s review
     3. 2nd-level committee is NOT at the college-level (there is a strong justification for this.)
     4. The 2nd-level committee will be a pan-university committee (of full professors) - one elected from each college (hopefully with experience in university-wide leadership roles.)
     5. If the candidate asks for GE in research and/or teaching, then there will be two 2nd-level committees. The first is the usual college level committee. The second is the pan-university committee – only for GE in Leadership.
     6. Back to the dean of the college.
     7. Then to the provost
5. **Provide Guidance (Anchored in the office of the provost)**:

* Purpose
* Definitions
* Nomination needed?
* Impact metrics for evaluation
* 1st level committee guidance (Department level)
  + Basis for selecting external reviewers – GE vs HC in teaching or research.
  + Current or past administrators, elected officers of the Senate, university standing committees who served in leadership roles – worked with the candidate or not
  + Guidance on how to handle the disclosure on confidential leadership activities (grievance committee, UPTRAC, HR etc.)
* Chairs guidance
* 2nd level committee formation
  + Set general guidelines on who might represent a college on this pan-university committee.
  + Leave it up to individual colleges on how that committee members are elected or appointed.
* Guidelines for references
* Need guidelines for verifying candidate claims on confidential leadership service rendered (examples below)
  + Chairing panels for HR and other compliance-related personnel actions
  + Leading roles on grievance committee resolutions
  + Certain Senate Executive Committee activities
  + Search committees for university leaderships

Attachments:

1. [The Memo and Framework Document (This Document)](https://gmuedu.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/FacultyMattersCommittee-GRP/EahKp5UcTtpBtaIQ3Eb8sIIBz373Vk7xUiF2CH5dsPPZZg?e=R0jCyd)
2. [Potential Markups in the FHB](https://gmuedu.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/FacultyMattersCommittee-GRP/ER04-FVrQk5BjHckzy7ZgNYBwF2ZJZfFrgVk0cALtkWAvA?e=VtukBw)
3. Associated [PowerPoint Presentation](https://gmuedu.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/FacultyMattersCommittee-GRP/Eed93TrsCyBAgtnT_bkwXfIBxhVRh8bYcDfZC8OqJEv47g?e=iaGtJz)