

## Faculty Life Committee - St. Olaf College

### Minutes for meeting of 9 December 2008

Present:

Eric Cole, chair  
Brian Borovsky  
Beth Christensen  
Dona Freeman  
Mary Griep  
Anne Groton  
Judy Stromayer

Corliss Swain  
Irina Walter  
Xun Pomponio  
  
Arnie Ostebee, ex-officio

The meeting was convened at 3:37pm in Dittman 204

- 1. Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of the Nov. 25 meeting were approved with friendly amendments.
- 2. Sabbatical Leave Proposals.** The committee heard a report from the subcommittee responsible for reviewing the proposals for sabbatical leaves. A discussion followed. Based on the subcommittee's recommendations, the committee as whole moved and passed approval of 26 applications for sabbatical leave as consistent with the goals of the sabbatical leave program. Also based on the subcommittee's recommendation, one application was declined.
- 3. Discussion of changes to documentation and procedure for sabbatical leave program.** The subcommittee that reviewed and made recommendations about the sabbatical leave proposals announced plans to seek some changes in the procedures for the program and in where information about the program is kept. These changes are meant to improve the administration of the program based on this year's experience. The subcommittee felt that there is a need for more clarity in the procedures, and that it makes sense to move information from the Faculty Manual to the Faculty Life Committee web site. Detailed motions for these changes will be made at a future meeting.
- 4. Discussion of changes to requirements for sabbatical leave program:** The committee discussed possible changes to requirements for sabbatical leave proposals. One change would be to make approval of a sabbatical leave proposal contingent on the completion of a final report for the previous sabbatical leave (if applicable). The other change would be to encourage proposers to show evidence of seeking external support for their projects. Such activity would count in favor of approving the proposal. No formal motions were made at this time.
- 5. Discussion of faculty development funds.** The committee discussed possible schemes for the allocation of faculty development funds. The discussion initially centered on whether to keep the released time awards, and if so how many per year. There was also discussion of making small grant awards more widely available for faculty development projects. Because the overall pool of funding is fixed in size, there is a trade-off between making an expensive released-time award to a single individual versus using that same amount of money to facilitate a variety of smaller projects that don't involve released time. There is another trade-off that goes along with this, which is between funding time to accomplish significant projects versus funding expenses or stipends to help make projects possible and encourage their completion.

A straw poll revealed a strong majority of the committee in favor of considering the available faculty development funds as a single large pool rather than dividing the overall budget into as many as four different pools dedicated to different kinds of projects.

Another straw poll revealed unanimous sentiment that there should be a program of small grants patterned after the summer grants (for scholarly/artistic activity and curriculum development) but with several changes deemed likely to improve how the funds are used:

- Make the grants available year-round
- Consider broadening eligibility beyond tenure-track faculty
- Allow for mixing of professional and curricular activities
- Consider a wider range of activities for funding
- Increase flexibility regarding the size of the project budget, say from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars or more. Perhaps no cap, but guidance as to what might be appropriate for different types of projects.

Discussion then turned to building accountability into the grants program. The committee decided that this will be an important aspect to keep developing as the program takes shape.

**6. Pre-tenure sabbatical leave program:** A motion was made to develop a recommendation to the Faculty Governance Committee requesting that a pre-tenure sabbatical leave program be implemented at St. Olaf College. The details of this recommendation would be worked out if the motion carries. There was discussion to the effect that this program would allow pre-tenure faculty the option to choose a one-semester leave at an appropriate time within the pre-tenure evaluation period, or to choose a post-tenure sabbatical leave within the scope of the current sabbatical leave program. The motion passed by voice vote.

**7. Discussion of increasing the size of the faculty development budget.** Because of the perceived need for increased faculty development funds for both released time and grants, the committee discussed initiating a conversation with the office of Government and Foundation Relations regarding possible sources of external funding for faculty development.

**8. Citing St. Olaf College in work completed with faculty development funds.** One member of the committee emphasized that it is important to request that faculty members cite support from St. Olaf College in any work completed with funding from the faculty development budget. The membership of the committee seemed to generally agree with this idea. No formal motion was made.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.