

**FACULTY SENATE  
FACULTY WELFARE COMMITTEE (NORMAN)  
2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT  
SUBMITTED BY GREG BURGE, CHAIR**

**I. Membership**

The members of the 2013-2014 Faculty Welfare Committee, their departments and terms:

Misha Klein	Anthropology, 2012-2013 (chair, Fall 2013)
Jerry Weber	Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, 2011-2013
Donna Nelson	Chemistry & Biochemistry, Spring 2013-2014
Aparna Mitra	Economics, 2013-2016
Chris Ramseyer	Civil Engineering & Environmental Science, 2013-2016
Greg Burge	Economics, 2014-2015 (chair, Spring 2014, completing Misha Klein's term)
Laren Rupp-Serrano	University Libraries, 2014 (completing Jerry Weber's term)

**II. Meetings**

The Faculty Welfare Committee met seven times. Four times during the Fall semester and three times during the Spring semester. An ad hoc committee to investigate issues relating to bullying/incivility on campus was formed by the FWC during the spring term. The membership of the ad hoc committee came from both inside and outside of the current FWC membership. Minutes from each of the seven FWC meetings are included at the end of this report.

**III. Issues**

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, The Faculty Welfare Committee identified prior issues to be pursued, as well as new issues for our agenda. Ultimately, three issues became our top priorities over the course of the year:

1. The promotion of faculty health & wellness through the improvement of:
  - a. walking paths on campus
  - b. exercise facilities on campus
  - c. access to exercise facilities off campus
  - d. safety and utilization rates of existing bicycle commuting options on campus

This effort focused on the previously adopted FWC Recommendation for Promoting Faculty Exercise and Wellbeing, passed in the previous year. It stated that:

“Whether one considers the faculty the head of the university, or its heart, every observer recognizes that it is the faculty which is responsible for producing the basic product of the modern American university; the creation and dissemination of knowledge. In addition, in parlous economic times such as we are experiencing today, it is ever more incumbent among

higher education institutions to do everything in their power to maintain the well-being of the faculty. Modern medicine and science tell us with clarity and conviction that encouraging, and creating the supportive environment for, physical activity is an important mechanism to support this objective.

At The University of Oklahoma, unfortunately, the physical facilities available for the support of physical activity for the faculty are sadly lacking. The Faculty Welfare Committee recognizes that some of the recommendations we offer may be, for the time being at least, financially unrealistic. However, we also proffer the observation that it is incumbent on the institution to make every effort to enhance the physical environment available for physical conditioning, as well as to create the psychological environment that encourages participation.

In addition to physical improvements suggested, we also offer the observation that a lack of facilities available only for faculty markedly diminishes the probability that faculty members will utilize the existing facilities. This refers both to workout and locker room facilities. Having looked at the overall existing facilities, we strongly support the following recommendations, offered in order of preference.

- i. Building a new faculty-only facility to contain both men's and women's locker and workout facilities.
- ii. Offering cooperative participation with existing health facilities in Norman and surrounding cities. Specifically, reference is made to the Blue Cross/Blue Shield "Silver Sneakers" program.
- iii. Improve existing facilities. The locker rooms are dated. They are fundamentally unchanged since the building was constructed in 1981. Further, the locker rooms do not support modesty. The showers are not private and the dressing area is open. Faculty often complain that they will not exercise at the Huston Huffman Fitness Center because of the locker rooms and the lack of privacy. The locker spaces could be friendlier to members utilizing wheelchairs. In addition, hot water is often an issue due to an old system. Facilities Management must continuously service the system. Equipment used in strength training is sometimes patched with tape as opposed to being properly repaired. In addition to discouraging use by faculty, the Huffman Center does not contribute to making OU an attractive site to potential students and parents who visit.

Building on these issues, the FWC heard a presentation by Breion Rollins on the progress of the building of the Scholar's Walking Path, as well as discussions of faculty access to off-campus workout facilities. Donna Nelson indicated the Blue Cross Blue Shield program for \$25 per month allows access to a number of facilities. Ongoing efforts to expand the group of community facilities participating in that package deal are ongoing.

2. The development of a campus-wide family leave policy. Having a draft of the policy adopted in 2012, we worked with various University officials in efforts to improve the policy and make it more compliant with current OU policies regarding sick/medical leave. The current version of the policy, which is very much a working draft in progress, is as follows:

**Family Fairness Policy**  
**Faculty Welfare Committee**  
**Spring 2014**

In considering the needs of faculty members and the University community, the University recognizes that faculty members may face situations in which their family obligations limit their ability to maintain all of their varied obligations and duties in the areas of research, teaching, and service. The work demands on faculty members involve duties outside of the academic calendar, alongside the obligations incurred during the 16-week semester. In the interest of attracting the best candidates to join our University community, and in order to retain and care for faculty who represent a major investment of the University's resources, the University seeks to create a cooperative work environment, supporting not only faculty research endeavors but the achievement of a sustainable and healthy work-life balance. Further, the University recognizes that major life events, such as the birth or adoption of a child, or the need for intensive care of another family member, do not necessarily conform to the academic calendar.

Therefore, in order to enable faculty to meet their ongoing research and service demands, and avoid disruption to students during the semester, we recommend that The University of Oklahoma Norman Campus formally adopt the following policy, which operates within the spirit of existing University of Oklahoma policies, including OU's Family and Medical Leave Policy. If, for any reason, an individual academic unit is unable to conform to this policy, they must draft an alternate policy that details the accommodations to be granted faculty under circumstances that require such consideration such as those specified below.

This policy provides for the automatic extension of the tenure clock for tenure-track faculty, and allows for one semester of modified teaching and relief from very demanding service duties if a tenure-track, tenured, or renewable term faculty member is a primary caregiver: (1) following the birth or adoption of a child; or (2) for an individual who has a serious health condition (as defined by OU policy).

A tenure-track faculty member who is a primary caregiver of a newborn or newly adopted child or a seriously ill family member will qualify for a one-year extension of the probationary period, unless s/he requests a waiver of the extension. This extension may be waived by eligible faculty members, if s/he so requests, before s/he goes up for tenure. Furthermore, if after consultation with her/his department chair and Committee A the faculty member wishes to go up for tenure at the time when s/he would have done so without the previously granted extension of the probationary period, it would not be considered an "early tenure" process. There is a maximum possible extension of two years due to multiple births, adoptions, or caretaking situations. The request to activate the extension of the probationary period must be made within 12 months of the qualifying event. The request must be submitted to the department chair and Committee A, who will forward the request along with a letter confirming the faculty member's eligibility to the Dean, who will in turn forward the request to the Provost. It should be noted that any tenure-track faculty member – including those who are expecting

the birth of a child or are adopting a child but are not the designated primary caregiver, as well as those experiencing hardship not related to this leave policy - can apply to extend her/his probationary period at any time.

In the event of these major family events, tenure-track, tenured, or renewable term faculty members may request modified duties. Faculty on modified-duties status will be relieved of direct teaching responsibilities and very demanding service requirements (e.g., Committee A), but will be expected to fulfill their other professional responsibilities (e.g., other departmental committee assignments, preparation of course materials, research and preparation of research proposals and publications, and supervision of graduate students). The faculty member will not be expected to make up the modified duties in a subsequent semester. Faculty will not be permitted to teach overload courses during the period of modified duties. The teaching component of the annual evaluation will make allowances for the period of modified duties. The annual evaluation rating and associated salary increases shall not be negatively affected by the period of absence. The maximum period for which modified duties will be assigned is one semester (i.e., Spring or Fall) per academic year. In the event of a birth or adoption of a child, the semester of modified duties should be completed within 12 months following the birth or adoption.

Faculty members requesting modified duties for one semester must inform the department chair as early as possible to allow time to process the request and identify and secure alternative teaching staff, if necessary. For requests related to birth or adoption, modified duties should be made no later than three months after the event. All requests for modified duties should be submitted in writing to the department Chair, who together with Committee A, will evaluate the request and write a letter detailing how the accommodation would be made within the department, which will be forwarded along with the request to the Dean. After approval by the Dean, copies of the approval shall be sent to the faculty member and the department chair.

A version very similar to the above policy was approved by both the Faculty Welfare and the Faculty Senate Executive Committees in 2012. From the point of view of the Faculty Welfare Committee, it has remained one of our top priorities since that point. We have had multiple discussions with administrators, legal authorities, human relations directors, and various other points of University contact. Among the important issues discussed were:

- The federal FMLA policy does not conform to the 16-week semester schedule at OU, causing disruptions because of discontinuities in teaching personnel
- The proposed policy is for modified duties, not a leave. Faculty cannot take a leave from their research endeavors and certain aspects of service
- Short-term modification of teaching and avoidable service would allow faculty in these situations to focus their continued scholarly efforts on research, minimizing disruptions
- The policy would help to create a supportive campus environment that recognizes faculty family responsibilities alongside their scholarly ones
- The policy would help to attract highly qualified candidates and retain faculty in whom the University has invested valuable resources

- The policy would be an important step towards gender equity, in recognition of the disproportionate burden of family care that falls on female faculty in general, while keeping the policy gender neutral in recognition of the social changes of the current generation
- Universities across the country are adopting similar policies, especially given recent research showing the loss of female researchers/faculty, especially in the STEM fields
- Because of the time involved in achieving a doctorate, and the common delay in childbearing among scholars, these circumstances weigh most heavily on junior faculty, who are also the most vulnerable (politically, professionally, and financially)
- The lack of a campus-wide policy, and the inconsistency in accommodations made across campus, is unfair, creates an atmosphere of distrust, and may leave the University vulnerable to legal action
- The concern this may place a burden on small units that may rely on a single faculty member for instruction of a particular course. At the same time, the policy would help ensure faculty in both large and small departments know they have access to the same accommodations from the standpoint of the University.
- The concern that additional resources will be needed to cover a policy of this nature is a valid one – but we recommend this concern be tempered through recognition that considerable resources are *already* being used to address situations of this nature. Our position is not that previous and current situations are always handled in ways that give no accommodations; it is that considerable variation exists in how situations are currently handled.
- The concern that this will look like an additional benefit in a political environment where that may be unpopular is also valid. We hope to frame this as a temporary application of modified duties in a way that protects continuity in the classroom as well as continuity in research.

Faculty members on FWC and Faculty Senate Executive Committee have been generally supportive of the issues and concerned with the inequities across campus. There remain important issues to overcome. Most importantly, the FWC wants to work as hard as possible to ensure the policy accommodates the concerns of administration, legal, and human resources, such that the policy would/could potentially be successful if eventually passed by Faculty Senate. Most recently, Greg Burge met with Greg Heiser, Jamie Hammer, Les Hoven, and Pamela Mitchell in a productive discussion. Some noted areas for concern/improvement were noted as:

- Stressing that the policy would not be intended for cases where FMLA leave and the invoking of a semester of modified duties were stacked back-to-back.
  - Clarifying exactly how faculty responsibilities during a semester of ‘modified duties’ do and do not differ from a normal semester.
  - Drafting the policies in ways that both large and small departments could reasonably comply.
  - Clarifying even more prominently that Departmental Chairs and College Dean’s still play a role in needing to approve the appropriateness of the qualifying event in cases where a faculty member is requesting a semester of modified duties.
3. Investigating campus culture as it relates to bullying and faculty incivility. Having identified this as an important new issue for the 2013-2014 year, several actions were taken on this issue.
- a. Misha Klein and Greg Burge attended a meeting with Provost Mergler and Greg Heiser

- b. The sentiment was to stress a positive, proactive approach, seeking to
  - i. Increase awareness & improve understanding of bullying
  - ii. Provide resources to those being bullied
- c. As such, an ad hoc committee on campus bullying was formed in January. Chris Ramseyer, Aparna Mitra, and Donna Nelson agreed to represent FWC and Susan Marcus-Mendoza and Susan Hahn agreed to serve as University faculty at large. The committee was formed and given the power to add more members as it sees fit, as well as to select a chair (or co-chairs) as it sees fit through elections. Susan Marcus-Mendoza was later selected by the committee as chair.
- d. Efforts to develop a faculty survey and identify other campus resources are ongoing and will continue to be an issue next year.

Note: At the April 7, 2014 Meeting the members of the FWC voted unanimously to select Greg Burge as Chair for the upcoming 2014-2015 academic year.