

**Minutes
Faculty Forum
University of Connecticut School of Medicine
May 5, 2009**

Dr. Robert Bona, Chair of the Oversight Committee, which had scheduled this Faculty Forum in order to provide for discussion by the SOM Faculty at-large on a draft proposal regarding Salary Guarantee for Tenured Faculty*, called the Forum to order at 5:31 PM.

**The text of this proposal was posted for all in advance, along with:*

(a) Appendix C of the UCSOM Bylaws [Post Tenure Review] and

(b) the related, currently in effect Policy 2004-03 of 11/27/07 (Tenured Faculty Minimum Guaranteed Academic Salary)

Background

Dr. Bruce Koeppen provided introductory background history on how this draft proposal came to be. In December, 2008, Dr. Laurencin had asked the Dean's Council (DC) to take up several questions pertaining to salary guarantees and tenure, such as (a) what level should the salary guarantee be with the achievement of tenure, (b) how should this be related to the availability of sufficient funds within the SOM and to faculty members' productivity, and (c) should there be changes to the existing policy on Post-Tenure Review? After subsequent written communications and questions were exchanged between DC and Dr. Laurencin, he met with them, and discussed the importance of the SOM having clarity about its priorities on this topic and having policy firmly in place in anticipation of potential impacts (at least for Clinical Faculty) of the proposed merger/"Partnership" with Hartford Hospital. In this light, the DC subsequently discussed further, and on 3/31/09, endorsed and forwarded the proposal now under discussion, along with the recommendation that this proposed policy be discussed at a Faculty Forum. Dr. Koeppen pointed out that the 75% floor level proposed in the policy was chosen to parallel the 9-month appointments and salaries of the faculty University of Connecticut at Storrs. In addition, he noted that the DC had gathered national data on this topic, from the AAMC/*Academic Medicine* and other sources, and found that (a) tenure for medical school faculty is generally on the decline, and (b) where tenure exists, there is a growing practice of providing a salary guarantee which is less than current salary at the time tenure is granted.

Discussion

There followed a wide-ranging discussion, with participation by many of the 52 persons present. The following represents an aggregation of the spectrum of points and/or questions raised regarding the proposal, without specific attribution to individuals.

- *When a particular statement has been placed in quotation marks, it represents as close to a direct quote as possible, with the intent to transmit the understood essence of the comment.*
- *In the interest of brevity, the summary eliminates repetitions of points, and is also therefore not necessarily in the sequence that points arose during the discussion.*

Process of Development of Policy

- Tenure-track/tenured faculty were recruited here under the current system, to teach and do research.
 - Changing rules mid-stream without due process is a “breach”
- Ed Marth (Executive Director Storrs chapter of AAUP): There is a Task Force currently revising and updating the Bylaws of the University of Connecticut and it is inserting indications where the SOM or SODM bylaws deviate. This proposal and process would be inconsistent with the policies at Storrs.
 - Noted that UCHC already had prior history of changing its tenure and promotion policy from Storrs' policy, when UCHC implemented extension of lead time to tenure from 7 years to current 9 years, in recognition of recent trends in extramural funding realities. He suggested that nine years is already a long time to delay opportunity for a significant favorable jump in compensation for one's work, and that this policy now threatens faculty with further risk of decreased financial support, without recourse
 - He noted that AAUP at least provides for a larger group support for faculty, ensuring the Storrs faculty a “seat at the table” in such discussions
 - Re. Storrs 9-month contracts: there is the anticipation that one can thereby get funding across the full 12 months of the year by acquiring funding for summer work as well as for effort during the rest of the year.
 - In addition, faculty's merit evaluation considerations in Storrs take into account the \$\$ brought in
- AAUP was founded to support faculty. A recent letter back from AAUP (?Anita Katz) in reply to inquiry posed to her after this proposal was circulated indicated the current AAUP position that “tenure means guaranteed freedom in teaching and research, and to a reasonable living, but not an absolute guarantee regarding salary.” “Can salary be decreased?: No”, but then followed with “in cases of extreme exigencies, salary may be changed, but there must be faculty representation in the decision.” It was then emphasized that faculty must make their views known to responsible bodies, that we must avoid any future law suits by eliminating the argument that “faculty were not included in the decision.”
- (picking up on point about AAUP providing Storrs faculty a “seat at the table”) “This policy proposal illustrates that the current Governance system at the SOM is not working, because faculty don't have access”
 - Our system is different even from the Dental School (SODM)
 - We don't have any large forum generally for the faculty to discuss such things
 - Brief discussion of the “pros and cons” of SOM's prior, larger “representative” school-wide Council model, cons had led to the change
 - The various councils need to be incorporated into the discussion of proposed policy changes
- The history of THIS proposal's process did not get it out to the larger faculty before now;
 - Concern that we are replaying the old pattern of “administration generates a proposal, asks the faculty for reaction, faculty return opinions and

recommendations for change or to desist, administration proceeds anyway, then reports to the Trustees ‘oh yes, we discussed with the faculty’”

- “This proposal is an insult to the faculty. The sentiment here is overwhelmingly against this proposal. How will this sentiment get expressed, where/when will a vote come?”
- “Representation issue”-- History of debate regarding topic of tenure at Boston University Medical Center, and an attempt by a former Dean there to eliminate/freeze tenure, blocked by the faculty, who maintained debate. Of note, that Dean’s argument at that time was “There can be no tenure if we don’t have the \$\$ to support it in full.”
- The idea/proposal to circulate a petition for faculty to sign “for” or “against” the proposed policy was suggested. A counterpoint was the expression of hope that the Dean will listen to the points made in this discussion and “defeat” or withdraw this particular proposal, because the speaker wants the Dean to be successful, but feels that we need to find solutions together to the difficult issues we face.
- A member of the Dean’s Council expressed the sense that perhaps the Dean’s Council had made a mistake by not sending the draft policy to the other Councils for their review and input prior to forwarding back to the Dean. A member of the Oversight Committee (OC) concurred that OC endorses that process of vetting by the respective Councils. The question was then raised as to whether this process might vary depending on whether the issue at hand is a policy as opposed to a bylaws change.
 - Another person noted that there is the recognition that the Dean’s Council is the group tasked with doing the ongoing, hard work. In that vein, and similar to when the bylaws change implementing Post-Tenure Review was passed several years ago, at times it will ultimately have to be the body that makes the hard decisions and recommends policy or bylaws that are the right thing, but not always popular.

Question of Need for the Policy

- It was then reiterated that the proposed policy is not good primarily because it is not clear what problem it is trying to solve.
 - Most faculty are NOT tenured/tenure-track, so this issue cannot be primarily economic
- It was pointed out that the criteria for faculty’s evaluations should be their fulfillment of their responsibilities to the institution. Clinical faculty are working hard in the “clinical engine” which is caring for low-reimbursing (ie. underfunded Medicaid and uninsured/self-pay) patients that many in the rest of the medical community are refusing to accept and so deflecting to Dempsey/UMG. UCHC is the state’s public university and has a responsibility to the state and to stand for doing the right thing. Tenure is not earned but is offered by the institution, and while some may have abused it, by and large most tenured faculty have contributed hugely to the institution and to their fields.

Concerns with Specifics of the Policy

- If this proposal is arising in the context of a proposed clinical Partnership, so pertaining predominantly to clinical income/productivity, yet tenure is achieved/granted on the basis of academic merit, how are these inherently different criteria to be reconciled?
- One could be rated as Superior in Merit evaluation, yet if enough of their activity was not funded by non-General Funds, they would still be at risk for cutting to 75% of salary. UConn environment is not “like Harvard”/“like Hopkins” with large grant-generating labs/enterprises; this policy takes only those members of the UConn faculty who are the “most-vetted” and reduces their flexibility to function, and would seem to have “no memory” regarding a faculty member’s excellent work and possibly even higher than “minimum threshold” of extramural funding over time.
 - It was suggested that if we are going to compare UCHC to other AHC's, then we need to look at the multiple other factors that may account for some of the differences in research productivity in those environments.
- There appear to be real distinctions between the compensation structures for Clinical and for Basic Science faculty at UCHC; perhaps the policy should also distinguish between them.
 - Eg., perhaps the UCHC Basic Science faculty should also be on 9 month salary contracts, to parallel the Storrs structure.
 - However, there is some anecdotal impression that the dollar amounts of the 9-month contract salaries for Storrs faculty are equivalent to the 12-month salaries for UCHC faculty in similar fields and rank.)
 - Concern expressed that recent talk of “one university, one faculty” is contradicted by this current proposal, which “makes UCHC faculty second class citizens”, immediately at risk for 25% of their salary (and fear expressed that this could later creep to 30%, 50%, etc.)
- “I cannot support the current version of the proposed policy—the fundamentals are OK, but not the details”

and,

- “It is reasonable that a faculty member share in the funding of one’s salary, but harmful to set arbitrary thresholds and threaten cuts in salary”
 - If faculty are trying, working hard on research and/or teaching/administration of value, even given Satisfactory or Superior evaluation of the quality of their work, but hit gaps in extramural funding, there is too much put at risk in current proposal, without clarity regarding available recourse options.
 - It was noted that faculty know that they must try to bring in external \$\$, and tenure represents the recognition of the success of one’s track record and the likelihood that this will predict success in the future, BUT that there are inevitably periods/intervals of “risk” regarding extramural funding during which faculty’s salary/livelihood should not be compromised.
 - This proposal is “all stick, no carrot”

- It seems inappropriate for there to be salary at risk without regard to whether one's performance is deemed satisfactory vs unsatisfactory;
 - it was then suggested that one could go on to define a \$\$ threshold as part of those evaluations (though this type of quantification has been warned against in the past).
- It was then suggested that the administration could play a positive role, facilitating getting faculty to apply for more grants, setting up mentors and/or pairs of researchers doing collaborative work, and other creative, proactive changes.

Potential/Likely Unintended Negative Impacts/Outcomes of the Policy

- Changing rules mid-stream without due process is a "breach" of the "covenant and contract" of tenure
 - Breach of trust with current faculty over agreed upon policies will negatively impact future faculty recruitment efforts
 - Future recruitment impact is likely less than the potential impact on retention of current faculty
- If the rules are to change, with thresholds for external \$\$ mandated, some faculty may be forced to decline requests to teach in order to increase grant-funded activity
- The version proposed will be damaging to faculty morale.
- This proposal would discriminate against older faculty
 - Assignment of some faculty by Dean's office to "fill gaps" sets up risk/likelihood of discriminatory activity
- University of Michigan did this in the 1990's, with the result that research grant \$\$ increased, but educational commitment and quality plummeted
- "The incentive to pursue an academic career in clinical research will be eroded, and this will crimp the capacity of the faculty and the institution to increase translational research"
- Two important aspects which academic tenure protects will be eroded by this proposal:
 - Institutional citizenship Tenure enables senior faculty to say "yes" when asked to step into important roles/functions for the institution (teach a course, serve on a committee, run a search process), electing to put some of their research activity and funding "on hold" for a period of time. This proposal would likely yield more "no"s, to the detriment of the institution.
 - Innovation (more insidious, less obvious) With the security of tenure, accomplished researchers can "stick their neck out" and elect to pursue a line of research which is early but could become big and important. Without the salary security, folks are less likely to pursue these line, will pursue the "safe, easy path, diminishing creativity and innovation"
- "This proposal provides for no incentivizing, only puts faculty at risk, placing their job/salary security in the hands of study sections (where there is a long-entrenched tradition and bias regarding perceived "relative value" of different academic health centers in awarding research funding)."

Dean's Comments Regarding the Policy and Discussion

- (re. process) Dr. Laurencin pointed out that current SOM Councils do work hard, and are elected by the faculty
- (re. alleged past history of Deans communication with BOD re. "discussed with faculty"): Dr. Laurencin responded that IF that had happened in the past, it was a thing of the past, that it would not be the process now, that "we must work together to move us forward"
 - Dr. Laurencin reiterated that he "will not simply charge forward if there is strong faculty opposition," and just a bit later reiterated that "we will do this jointly," adding that "we must find solutions to important issues if we are to move forward":
 - Research—we must recruit/hire excellent faculty with strong research funding capabilities and/or with funded programs
 - A new fund-raiser/development officer for UCHC has been hired to assist in expanding revenue sources
 - There are not enough General Funds to support the full spectrum of activities that faculty do, and the General Funds for the institution are at risk so we must use them wisely (as well as find additional resources through development, etc.)
 - He pointed out that IF there is an attitude (on the part of some) that tenure equals 100% salary support with no expectation to bring in non-GF \$\$, then that attitude must change.
 - Recognizes that it is difficult for most faculty to bring in 70-80% salary support, but states that only bringing in 0 -10% is likely recognized by all as inadequate.
 - We need improved support systems in place, such as through HCRAC, eg. new "start-up" grants for new and established faculty
 - HCRAC is working on an internal grants program, and on mentorship, and on a clinician-scientist program (mentioned Andy Arnold as involved in this latter).
 - A Faculty Member's Response: But Chairs developed the current standard criteria for expectations and Superior performance in the Academic Merit Review process, which is not felt by faculty to be working. It was noted that Post-Tenure Review has led to some retirements, which could be interpreted to mean that that is working.
- The Dean wants to empower Department Chairs to work with faculty to bring all of these things to pass, that the Chairs will know if their faculty are making the effort, and if the Chairs and faculty have a clearer capacity to define goals, we can more likely create within the institution an environment for success.

Respectfully compiled and submitted by
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June 2, 2009

With edits/revisions/clarifications from C. Jacob, 6/23/09