

**Faculty Grievance Officer
Annual Report to the Faculty Senate
June 29, 2007**

In accordance with the procedures established by the Faculty Senate Redbook Committee, as authorized in *Redbook* section 4.4.1.A, following is the report of the activities of the Faculty Grievance Officer for the period July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007.

This is the third year of a three-year term. The President has appointed a replacement, Prof. David Simpson, who will take over the position on July 1, 2007. Prof. Simpson and I have met to orient him; I have forwarded to him files on all continuing cases.

In the past year, I have consulted with 16 individuals concerning 18 disputes or concerns, resulting in 8 grievances filed, 3 of which were accepted by the UFGC and 2 of which are pending. None of those grievances has been resolved to date; 4 were filed in the past month and the first was a complex, protracted case for which the hearings are complete but the Committee is still writing the final report. One grievance carried over from the previous year. A breakdown of activity by unit follows.

Unit	# new consultations	# grievances filed	# resolved informally following filing of grievance	Other Resolutions
A&S	3	3	0	None of these 3 accepted by UFGC
Medicine	3	1 (plus 1 from previous year)	0	UFGC found against faculty member in 1 1 pending
CEHD	6	3	0	pending
CBPA	2	1	0	pending
Dentistry	2	0	0	
Nursing	2	0	0	

As with previous years, a disproportionate number of consultations have related to the College of Education and Human Development (one-third). Over the three years of my tenure as FGO, I have consulted with at least one-third of the CEHD faculty. Throughout this time, I have heard talk of retaliation against faculty members who file grievances or requests for mediation. The majority of those I have spoken with are not willing to file grievances because of this fear of retaliation, which extends to those who testify at grievance hearings as well. This situation demonstrates a significant weakness in the grievance system, in that there is no way to prevent such retaliation when one files a complaint against someone who has the power to determine work load agreements and salary increases, approve expenditures, and allocate resources.

I have continued to encourage faculty members to try mediation before going to grievance. In the two cases that I know about, the administrators in question refused to go to mediation, so the case went to grievance. I believe that it might be helpful for deans and other administrators to be educated about the use of mediation as a way to handle disputes with faculty, especially those around allocation of duties through annual work load agreements. Many grievances might have been avoided had administrators been willing to have a neutral third party present in earlier phases of dispute resolution. Streamlining this process so that administrators may request mediation rather than requiring a faculty member to go through the formal process of requesting it, only to have the administrator refuse, would greatly enhance dispute resolution processes in this university.

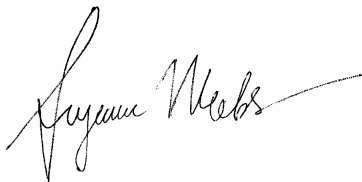
More generally across the University, it appears that a disproportionate number of grievances come from faculty with minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly from Asian or Middle Eastern backgrounds. This might be a coincidence related to the departments that generate disputes, but I wonder if cultural factors might be playing a role in the failure to resolve disputes in a collegial fashion, and whether more opportunities for training administrators with regard to how cultural and gender differences affect interpersonal confrontation and disputes might be helpful.

This year, a little over 1/3 of my consultations were from minority or foreign-born faculty members. This again speaks to the need of better training of administrators in dispute resolution, particularly with regard to ethnic differences. Use of minority-matched mediation might be one solution that should be explored.

The UFGC has functioned relatively well this year, although they have had difficulty finding and keeping a Chair. One issue that has arisen repeatedly is the problem of faculty who are on 10-month contracts who get elected to the Committee and then do not want to do any committee work in the summer. The bulk of the grievance work comes in from mid-April to mid-June, which means most grievances will be filed in the early summer months. It is not possible for this University committee to take the summer off. The expectations need to be made clear in all units before elections are held. Further, it would be appropriate to investigate some summer compensation for 10-month faculty, especially if one of them is the Chair of the committee.

I have found my three years as Grievance Officer both gratifying and frustrating. I appreciate the support I have had from the members of the UFGC, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and the Provost's Office. Staff support from Cathy Elliott and Kathy Carden has been excellent. I have had the opportunity to meet people from across the University, and to help some of them to resolve their disputes or to come to terms with situations that cannot be resolved. My frustrations have been related primarily to the disaffection of faculty in the CEHD, and my inability to help them find a solution to the difficult work environment that seems to exist there.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Meeks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Suzanne Meeks, Ph.D.
University Faculty Grievance Officer