

ACADEMIC FEDERATION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2000

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

--Kevin Roddy, Chair
Academic Federation

A farewell message to the Federation, on the expiration of my office, necessitates some sort of retrospective. As might be expected, my experience has been positive and negative. Since one of my colleagues, a revered and distinguished one, recently said that a positive tone has marked my tenure as chair; I can't believe it, but in light of her credentials, I suppose I must. So I will conclude with the positive.

Even the negative, though, is unalloyed. I choose as emblematic a series of events from some months ago: a mid-level academic/administrative post became vacant, and a number of Federation members were encouraged to apply when the position was to be advertised. However, when the announcement came out, it was limited to Senate faculty. When many of us protested, we were told that this was the result of consultation with past incumbents and affected faculty, for which we must read "Senate faculty." At this point, I must admit to a kind of extortion: I wrote contesting both the assertion (since it was dubious at least) and the spirit behind it; and, I confess, with some causticity, I copied a good number of affected Senate faculty. The result was to be expected: a longer, more desperate and more tenuous explanation followed, copied as well to those same faculty. This resulting minor cascade of messages made no short-term difference, and may have even hardened positions.

At this point, Dan Wick recalled that there had been an informal agreement, late in his office as chair, that no Federation titles would be excluded from administrative positions. And the agreement had held; the best guess is that this particular position antedated the change, and when it was resurrected from Mrak's cold storage, the old prejudices emerged, preserved. Dan wrote a memo that was accepted as an accurate reconstruction of the past,

and--while it is still not enshrined in an APM, I can fully expect that the Federation's famous collective memory will prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

Though the long-term results will be positive, I cannot help but be disturbed: a more generous solution would have revised the advertisement, with a short and gracious apology. But, more serious than this, our subsequent discussions admitted that, indeed, an administrative post might be more appropriate for Senate faculty; all we asked was that the Federation would not be excluded from even applying. I dislike such concessions: I do not personally feel that any skills and experience are specific to any segment on campus.

Certainly outweighing such incidents is the very real progress made by the Nash-Goldman Joint Committee on Federation Personnel issues. Thanks to a long, consistent, unflagging progress, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Committee, and of Steve Blank, our indefatigable representative, and thanks to the commitment of Vice-Provost for Academic Personnel Barry Klein, the efforts of the past twenty-two years (at least) are coming to fruition: finally, there is every expectation that Federation positions, their descriptions and expectations will be regularized and rationalized. Finally, the Federation Personnel process will receive its due acknowledgment. And, most importantly, finally, Federation peer review will be that much closer to reality. This last achievement, so long in coming and so much longer deserved, can be taken as true progress, the true positive accomplishment of extensive, arduous work. One estimate has been that seven different committees since the seventies have addressed personnel inequities. And the issues are not trivial: without peer review, we have been prevented from fully participating in our joint academic enterprise.

Anyone familiar with Federation activities will not be surprised by this success; it is a testimony to inexorable resolution. More battles await, notably a proposal to eliminate the upper-division writing requirement and thereby decimate English Department lecturers. But we can still pause to thank those who have served the Federation so well in the past: especially Charles Lacy, the retiring Dean of University Extension. Charles, a leader since the inception of the organization, must contemplate with satisfaction the positive changes the Federation has experienced; the barely-perceptible movement of the early years must have been a particular frustration to him, and I hope recent gains have counterbalanced that. So thanks. Though I wish I had personally, I am proud that we collectively have done so much.

Donna McDaniel

The Academic Federation mourns the death of Donna McDaniel, who served us as an Assistant from last summer until her passing in March. She was a warm, caring person, and we will miss her very much.

Academic Federation Executive Council

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AF PERSONNEL ISSUES RECEIVE ATTENTION

--STEVE BLANK, ACADEMIC ASSISTANT TO THE VICE PROVOST – ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

In response to the report submitted earlier this year by the so-called Nash-Goldman committee (NG), Vice Provost Barry Klein has appointed two workgroups to develop suggested methods of implementing improvements to the personnel process affecting Academic Federation (AF) members. The NG report will be available on the web at an address to be announced soon. In it the NG committee makes 29 recommendations about some general and some specific issues involving the personnel system as applied to AF title series. After a period in which review comments were received about the NG report, Vice Provost Klein decided that the next step was to begin implementing recommendations. Therefore, the two workgroups were appointed.

One workgroup is made up of people in AF and Academic Senate positions. That group will address the NG recommendations that deal with policy and some procedural issues. The second workgroup consists of staff with personnel expertise at the department, deans office and campus levels and is chaired by the author. It will address the NG recommendations that deal primarily with procedural issues. Both work groups are charged to identify best practices that will improve the fairness and operational efficiency of the personnel system for all AF titles at UC Davis.

The timetable for implementing any changes is spread over the next year. Some NG recommendations will be implemented during the 2000-01 personnel cycle and it is expected that all remaining recommendations will be implemented during the following year. The implementation process will involve opportunities for feedback from AF faculty, Senate faculty and personnel staff. Once fully implemented, any changes made in response to the NG report will continue to be monitored by the Vice Provost's office to assure that they are facilitating progress in our personnel system.

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