

**Senate Advisory Committee on Academic Policy (SACAP)  
Update for Academic Senate Executive Committee  
Monday February 13, 2023**

**Policy Issues – 2022-23 Academic Year**

**1. Thesis Office Process and Deadlines**

Building on previous SACAP Committee work, this effort is moving into its 4th year. The goal is to use data collected from faculty and students to make changes / update Thesis Office processes and deadlines to better meet the needs of students and faculty expectations.

Since last year's report, a Thesis Office survey was distributed to 1645 faculty members who were listed as a committee member on a thesis or dissertation from 2019 through 2021. A total of 241 individuals participated in the survey (14.7%), however, 83 people completed less than 45% of the survey or were removed from the data analysis. Of the 158 remaining participants, 47 indicated they had never served in any role with a student that had required them to engage with the Thesis Office or access Thesis Office services. Survey responses from the remaining 111 were included in the data analysis. Initial review of the data indicate some improvements since last summer's changes to speed up the processing time. However, there are still some specific issues with the website, resources, forms and timeliness of correspondence. (See report provided)

With changes coming at the Graduate School, VP for Research Erin Rothwell was consulted on next steps. VP Rothwell enlisted the help of Caren Frost (AVP for Research Integrity & Compliance) to secure a consultant to explore the issues raised in the survey, particularly processes that seem to interfere with student successful completion of their degrees. This project is still in process.

**2. University Retirement Plans and Benefits Committee Activities**

SACAP moved into its second year working with HR to address concerns raised regarding the activities of the Retirement Plans Committee. When similar concerns regarding the Benefits Committee were present, the SACAP asked for a meeting with Wendy Poppleton and Jeff Herring (CHRO) to address the concerns. The meeting produced the following agreed upon outcomes:

1) The role of the Retirement Plans and Health Benefits Advisory Committees are called "advisory" however, will almost exclusively function as a decision making body, although the CHRO may make different decisions in consultation with other University leadership. It was clarified that the Health Benefits both committees serves work with the HR department for the academic units on campus, as well as University Health Academics departments (including all physicians [faculty] in the hospitals and clinics). The committees will generally meet every other month in the fall and more often as needed in the spring.

2) SACAP will have a standing position on each committee and will provide two way communication between the SACAP and the committee as needed. In addition to these positions, SACAP will be responsible for filling the 4 faculty positions on each of the two committees. (Currently there are already 3 faculty on Retirement Plans and 1 faculty on Benefits.) It was suggested that for the Benefits Retirement Committee SACAP try to include MD faculty.

3) Amy Barrios will be asked to find a representative for the academic non-faculty position. Jeff will reach out to her and/or Dave Kieda.

4) The Staff Council, as the representative body of the staff, will have similar standing positions with responsibility to report issues back to the Staff Council. HR will work with the Staff council to fill the staff positions on both committees and will work to have representations from different staff types including for example non-administrative staff, salaried, hourly, etc.

5) In filling all positions efforts should be made to include people with some knowledge of and/or interest in the topic areas.

6) The HR representatives are open to having co-chairs lead each of the committees with one person from HR and another from faculty or staff.

7) Both committees will work to increase transparency and provide opportunities for broader U community benefit member participation.

8) In addition to discussing specific retirement plan and benefit issues, the committees can be used to gather suggestions for disseminating information, gathering input, and evaluating the impact of changes.

Some of the agreed upon changes have taken place including expansion of the committees to include more staff and faculty members and announcement of the Retirement Plans Committee and posting of minutes on the HR webpage. Other changes have not occurred leading to ongoing concerns within SACAP. Specific concerns include a general lack of transparency by limiting the role of the committee members and their access to information regarding upcoming agendas, meeting dates, etc. The scope of the Benefits Committee has been restricted to Health Benefits leaving a gap regarding transparency on other staff and faculty benefits.

Work continues to achieve the transparency needed to support faculty (and staff) governance and input in these important areas.

### **3. Prevalence and challenges facing jointly appointed faculty**

Last year Claudia Geist raised the question regarding the need for more University wide policy to provide guidelines for faculty with joint appointments (and possibly shared appointments).

This fall Claudia began a roughly 2-year faculty fellowship in the Office For Faculty (OFF). One of her tasks is to do education and policy clarification for shared and joint appointments. This spring OFF will start a pilot program creating new job codes that will distinguish between shared appointment and joint appointments. It is hoped there will be written MOUs for these situations. IT is quite messy behind the scenes and will need to be address so that information is stored and changed in University systems for personnel data to reflect the joint and shared appointments.

### **4. Selecting Distinguished Professors (DP)**

ASEC requested SACAP take up a review of the policy and actual processes used for selecting Distinguished Professors as a concerned faculty member raised the following questions in the most recent ASEC meeting. 1) The process for awarding Distinguished Professorships does not follow procedure (6-300 3. d. i.) and 2) What is the SVP's role in the process as it is currently carried out?

The charge to SACAP is to determine how the actual selection process is currently being carried

out and determine in what ways it does or does not align with the current policy. SACAP members ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball and Pedro Romero volunteered to take on this task. Following a review of current policy and practice, ShawnaKim and Pedro identified areas of inconsistency.

ShawnaKim and Pedro identified a disconnect between how the selection process is communicated to potential DP, and how it actually happens. The policy seems adequate but it is not consistent with the application process and actual procedures carried out. The recommendation was that work continue to align the Faculty Handbook, the application process and the actual procedures. Additionally, there were questions regarding the role of the particular SVP.

Trina Rich, Director, University & Academic Affairs Policy Administration in the Office for Faculty is currently working with the SACAP team to create the desired alignment and guide the changes through the necessary approval process.

### **SACAP Consultation**

In addition to the issues listed above, the SACAP was asked to provide feedback on a number of issues throughout the course of the year. This is a list of topics brought to the SACAP for input:

#### 1) HR Policy and Procedure changes

Presented by: Wendy Poppleton, Rosemary Norton, policy support Allyson Hicks

Policies reviewed: Health related – 5-200A – vacation donation policy  
Parental leave policy – 5-200B  
Leave policies – 5-201A  
Insurance programs – 5-303

#### 2) Changes to Additional Compensation Policy

Presented by: AVP Sarah Projansky

Policies reviewed: Changes to additional compensation policy

#### 3) University Independent Personnel Boards & Procedures for Complaints under the Utah Protection of Public Employees Act

Presented by: Bob Thompson

Policy Reviewed: 5-211: “Whistleblower” Statute changes

#### 4) Student Rights and Responsibilities

Presented by: Dean of Students Jason Ramirez, Lahrona Johnson, Ken Stonebrook, Robert Payne

Policies Presented: Policy 6-400:

## SACAP Members for 2022 - 2023

Vu Minh Thu Ha	ASUU
Jin Heo	ASUU
Julie Barkmeier-Kraemer	Medicine
Claudia Geist	Social and Behavioral Science
Youjeong Kang	Nursing
ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball	Humanities
Pamela Phares	Nursing
Joy Pierce	Humanities
Pedro Romero	Engineering
Timothy Schmidt	Medicine
Mary Beth Vogel-Ferguson	Social Work
Sonia Solari (ex-officio)	Social and Behavioral Sciences
Allyson Mower (ex-officio)	Libraries
Allyson Hicks (ex-officio)	Administration
Mike Braak (ex-officio)	(support staff)

**Purpose of SACAP:** The Senate Advisory Committee on Academic Policy (SACAP) considers any matter relating to academic policy broadly defined, including matters relating to academic activities to teaching and research, the University libraries (formerly a function of the Senate Advisory Committee on Libraries), and salaries and benefits of faculty and other academic personnel (formerly a function of the Senate Advisory Committee on Salaries and Benefits). It may consider any relevant matter which may be suggested by members of the Committee, members of the faculty, administrative officers, or students. The Senate Executive Committee, or the Senate, may refer to this committee any question or consideration of any proposal regarding academic policy which is not otherwise assigned to another committee of the Senate, or which may benefit from study by this committee as well as another committee. Upon its selection of a subject for study, the Committee shall notify all interested agencies within the University, including standing committees, and invite their cooperation. For matters related to the University Libraries, consultation shall include the Libraries administrators, and for matters related to academic personnel salaries and benefits consultation shall include human resources administrators. At least once each academic year, the Committee shall submit a written report of its studies and recommendations, if any, to the Senate.

- Governing Document: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-002.php>