**CLAS Faculty Development Committee**

**2010-2011 Annual Report**

**Membership:**

Rachel Anderson Matt Boelkins Paul Keenlance

Steve Matchett\* Christen Pearson Rick Rediske

Ross Sherman David Stark Heather Van Wormer

\*= chair

**Ex Officio**: Jann Joesph

The CLAS Faculty Development Committee (FDC) is a faculty advocacy committee that sees its mission as addressing the issues that affect the development of CLAS faculty in the areas of teaching, research and service. While the committee has numerous duties related to sabbaticals, issues brought to the committee’s attention by the CLAS faculty determine much of our non-reviewing agenda. Faculty members with a concern about an issue affecting faculty development are encouraged to contact the FDC chair.

The committee met for 90 minutes every other week, with more frequent and longer meetings during November for review of CLAS sabbaticals.

**Teaching:**

The FDC supervised the review of nominations for teaching awards in the college. In September, we appointed a Teaching Excellence Award Committee to review these proposals, consisting of three faculty representatives (past winners of the award) and three CLAS undergraduates (chosen by faculty recommendation). We greatly appreciate the work of the members of this committee and congratulate the CLAS recipients of teaching awards for the year.

**Research:**

During the month of October, FDC reviewed the nominations from CLAS for the Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence research awards (Distinguished Early-Career Scholar Award Distinguished Undergraduate Mentoring Award, Distinguished Graduate Mentoring Award). This awards program has grown since beginning last year. The committee would like to encourage the college to submit more candidates since CLAS can submit up to 7 names in each category to the final review process by CSCE.

**Sabbaticals**

The sabbatical is a time of scholarly renewal which is a privilege valued by the academic community. In times of contracting fiscal resources, it is increasingly crucial that we clearly communicate the scholarly value of the sabbatical to those outside our community. The FDC takes the position that we want all faculty members to receive their sabbatical, and we work to help faculty propose their work in a way that will reflect favorably on GVSU. Much of our time and effort is spent in support of faculty who are in the process of proposing a sabbatical.

During the summer of 2010, three potential sabbatical proposals were sent to the committee for a pre-read (a service offered to all CLAS faculty). These proposals were sent to several committee members who posted their comments and suggestions back to the proposer. Feedback on this service has been uniformly positive.

Two times each year, the FDC hosts a sabbatical proposal development workshop; one in the fall and again in the winter semester. These workshops are to provide general information about the proposal process and expectations as well as an opportunity to speak with committee members about developing your sabbatical idea into a successful proposal. The first workshop was held September 30th. This workshop was attended by both CLAS faculty (10-12) and representatives from another GVSU college interested in using this format in the future. The winter workshop will be held on Thursday April 7th, from 3:30-5pm in PAD 308.

The month of November is devoted to the review of sabbatical proposals. Last year the committee prepared step-by-step guidelines to writing a sabbatical proposal and these were sent to every potential applicant. Of the 106 sabbatical eligible faculty in CLAS, 48 submitted proposals. A subcommittee of three reviewed each proposal, making sure that no member of a subcommittee belonged to the same unit as the proposer. Subcommittees reported back to the full committee with recommendations and full-group discussion. If there is lack of affirmative consensus in the subcommittee, the entire FDC read the proposal and discussed it. Our recommendations were then forwarded to Dean Antczak. The overall quality of reviewed proposals was high. At the end of the process, CLAS supported 94% of the sabbatical proposals submitted for the year.

The FDC is pleased by the overall quality of this year’s proposals, but is concerned by the low number of sabbatical proposals being submitted each year (at or below 50% eligible for the last 4 years). This is creating a backlog of deferred sabbaticals that roll over to each subsequent year. The sabbatical is an excellent opportunity to develop and enrich our scholarship and yet many faculty members are choosing not to apply. As a committee focused on faculty development, we have begun to explore the reasons why faculty are not applying for sabbatical. This has been one of our major agenda items for the winter semester. The committee has been compiling data for the last 5 years of sabbatical eligibility/application and is currently analyzing it in search of reasons for the lack of proposals. The data will serve as a springboard to open conversations with department chairs and faculty about the under-utilization of this valuable resource. The use of the sabbatical is optional, but the lack of proposals should not be the result of resource issues, departmental support issues, or a misunderstanding of the process.

**Alternative Contracts and Hiring:**

With parenting issues, aging parent populations and the associated care needs of both groups, many universities have adopted the use of negotiated reduced load contracts to allow faculty members to deal with outside pressures. While GVSU has several reduced load contracts, there is no formal handbook policy for dealing with the review and promotion of these faculty members. The FDC is currently reviewing the use of reduced load contracts, shared positions, joint appointments between departments, and the current lack of adoption leave as ways to enhance workplace flexibility in aid in faculty hiring and retention. We are examining the handbook language from each of our peer institutions to look for workable best practices. These will be combined with our growing database of other schools with alternative contracts in use to initiate a campus wide discussion on the value of these types of contracts in helping faculty deal with life issues while navigating their career.