

Faculty Senate Bill Charging the Provost to Establish a University-Wide Policy for Shared Academic Positions

Submitted by the department of Physics, 9/5/09

Background:

One of the challenges for Truman is attracting and keeping qualified, committed faculty. One of the most common reasons promising candidates turn down offers is because there is nothing in the Kirksville area for their significant others.

Another challenge is that the system of employment in higher education is still primarily modeled on the assumption that a family consists of a man who works full-time and a woman who takes care of the home and the kids. Often, however, both partners in a family have careers, and both partners consider care of their home and kids (if they have any) as important as career.

In physics there are significantly fewer women in the professoriate than in related areas such as chemistry or mathematics. This presents an on-going challenge for the physics community, and every thing we can do to address this imbalance is important. (There is evidence that the best way to recruit women into physics is to have women teachers, role-models and mentors, which is hard to do when a department has no women faculty members.) It is also true that a particularly large portion of women physicists are married to men physicists. Other departments may have similar problems recruiting related to this issue.

Starting in the 90s, the physics discipline/department has attempted to allow for the option of hiring two physicists for one full-time position. Each would have half-time teaching and research responsibilities; ideally both would get full benefits. Both would have to have the appropriate qualifications. At that time, we actually lost a promising candidate (who was married to a physicist) specifically because we would not allow that option. In more recent years we have asked to include such an option in our advertisement for the position, but were told by the administration we could not. In all cases, the administrators (various division heads, deans, vice presidents, and associate vice presidents) enthusiastically supported the idea, but said that the appropriate details needed to be put in place. Two years ago an associate vice-president promised that such a policy would be in place in one year, but that has not happened.

Some kind of shared-position policy would be helpful in recruiting good faculty at Truman, and the lack of such a policy has already hurt us in a few cases. A number of institutions of higher education have shared-position policies in place. These include Grinnell and LeMoyne. The challenges to establishing such a policy include dealing with tenure and promotion for those sharing a position, and current state policies limiting certain benefits for those who are not full time. Provost Paino has been working on trying to address this issue independently of the Faculty Senate, however this is an issue in which the Faculty Senate and the Project Team for Teaching and Evaluation have an

important stake—they should be involved in the process of developing such a policy, and they should be advocating for the development of such a policy.

Though this request is coming out of the department of Physics, such a policy would benefit all academic departments at Truman.

The Actual Bill:

Resolved that The Faculty Senate charges the Provost to initiate the process of putting into place a university-wide policy for shared academic positions, with the goal of having such a policy in place by August 15, 2010,

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate will provide one of its members to serve with the Provost in this process,

Be it further resolved that the Provost will consult with the Project Team for Teaching and Evaluation in developing this policy,

Be it further resolved that the Provost will report back to Faculty Senate in January 2010 on the progress of this process.