

CLAS Faculty Development Committee 2015-2016 Annual Report

Membership:

Rachel Anderson	Grace Coolidge	James McNair (Fall)
Esther Billings	Margaret Dietrich	Sally Ross
Shannon Biros	Caitlin Horrocks (Chair)	Heather Van Wormer

Jason Yancey (Winter)

Ex Officio: Donovan Anderson

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 CLAS faculty determine much of our 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 October for review of CLAS sabbaticals.

Teaching Awards:

The FDC supervised the review of nominations for teaching awards in the college. In September, we appointed a Teaching Excellence Committee to review these proposals; the faculty representatives on this committee were Tim Evans (chair), Nathan Barrows, Andrew Spear (all past winners of the award) and two 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 and Mentoring Awards:

During October, the FDC reviewed the nominations from CLAS for the Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence research and mentoring awards (Distinguished Early-Career Scholar Award, Distinguished Undergraduate Mentoring Award, and Distinguished Graduate Mentoring Award). Participation in this awards program has grown since its inception. However, the committee would like to encourage the college to submit more candidates since CLAS can submit up to seven 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 a time of contracting fiscal resources, it is 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 the university. Much of our time and effort is spent in support of faculty who are in the process of proposing a sabbatical.

In May and June 2015 the FDC offered two sabbatical writing workshops; 26 CLAS faculty members registered to attend. Over the remainder of the summer, fourteen draft sabbatical proposals were sent to the committee for a pre-read (a service offered to all CLAS

faculty). These proposals were distributed to former committee members who provided comments and suggestions to the proposer.

From September 15 to October 15 the FDC reviewed submitted sabbatical proposals. Of the 144 sabbatical eligible faculty in CLAS, 46 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 was a lack of affirmative consensus in the subcommittee, the entire FDC read the proposal and discussed it. Our recommendations were then forwarded to Dean Antczak. This year was the first for a new university-wide ranking system in which proposals are designated “Recommend,” “Recommend with Reservations,” or “Do Not Recommend.” The overall quality of the proposals was high. CLAS supported 93% of the sabbatical proposals submitted for the year as either “Recommend” or “Recommend with Reservations.”

CLAS sabbaticals were then forwarded to the University Sabbatical Review Committee. This group reviewed all of the sabbatical proposals in the university and made recommendations to the provost. Four proposals from CLAS were not recommended by the USRC, resulting in an overall success rate of 85% for CLAS sabbatical proposals.

The FDC discussed possible improvements to the sabbatical review process and drafted a memo to the USRC. Those changes have not been finalized, but include alterations to the review timeline and to the inclusion of past sabbatical reports. The FDC also recommended that increased feedback on proposals be available both to proposal authors and to the other levels of sabbatical reviewers.

The recommendation for increased feedback emerges partly from a series of interviews FDC members undertook with all CLAS unit heads during Winter 2016, to learn more about how sabbaticals are reviewed within different departments. The FDC is currently compiling this information with the goal of helping units offer support and effective feedback to faculty members seeking a sabbatical. During unit-level review proposers can both receive feedback from colleagues in their discipline and edit their proposals in response; we want to encourage all faculty to give and receive substantive feedback to/from departmental colleagues, strengthening projects and proposals.

This summer the FDC will once again be offering at least one workshop for CLAS faculty writing sabbatical proposals for fall submission. The date and format of the workshop(s) will be announced soon.

Family Leave

The FDC became aware of problems with GVSU’s maternity leave policy and the way it is currently being interpreted and implemented. The committee looked into this issue, wrote a memo, and made a presentation to the Executive Committee of the Senate, asking the Senate to review the policy implementation and hopefully work towards improvements. We also noted that we see a lack of family-friendly policies at GVSU as a barrier to professional development, work/life balance, recruitment, retention, and diversity, and believe GVSU can do more to be a truly inclusive university. Our work on these issues will continue into 2016-2017.