Faculty Welfare Committee
Annual Report
2005-2006

Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) members for 2005-2006 were: Beth Bilderback (Librairies), Joan Donohue (Moore School of Business), Darris Hassell (Spanish, replacing Fran Gardner as Regional Campus Representative from USC Lancaster), Brant Hellwig (College of Law), Don Jordan (Center for Science Education), Tim Mousseau (Biological Sciences), Joel Samuels, (College of Law--1 yr. replacement for Kenny Whitby), and Gene Reeder (ex-officio member as Chair of the Faculty Senate). The Committee was chaired by Marja Warehime (Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

At its first meeting, the FWC set an agenda that built on the previous year’s work and focused on three benefits of particular interest to faculty:

- preventive health care
- tuition aid for faculty children
- parental leave policy

As the Committee devoted most of its attention to this agenda, the report will first address progress on the agenda and then discuss other issues brought to the Committee in the course of the year.

Preventive Care

The Committee drafted a letter which was sent to Provost Becker, then forwarded to President Sorensen, concerning the desirability (and cost-effectiveness) of establishing a preventive care health benefit available to all faculty and staff, notably through the “Standard Plan” which is the choice of some 96% of Faculty on the Columbia campus. The letter was presented to the Faculty Senate at the November 3, 2005 meeting (a copy was introduced in the minutes) and a Resolution requesting the President and the Provost’s support for a preventive care benefit passed unanimously.

Over the course of the year, the Committee contacted other Faculty Welfare Committees in the state to ask if they would be willing to draft similar letters and explore the idea of a preventive care benefit. Both Clemson and USC-Aiken moved rapidly to do this. Other schools are willing to take it up in committee. The Chair particularly thanks her counterpart Dr. Rachel Mayo at Clemson for her work on this issue. While the Committee recognizes that negotiations to establish such a benefit are beyond its purview and authority, the Committee also met with our Vice President for Human Resources, Jane Jameson, in the spring in order to explore ways to advance the issue. Her office made it possible for the Chair to meet with Mr. Robin Tester, our liaison with the State Budget and Control Board, in early May in order to discuss the desirability of such a benefit. While there is no possibility of affecting negotiations for next year’s insurance plans, and Mr. Tester is not convinced that preventive care measures are cost-effective, he did express a willingness to meet with faculty representatives during his normally scheduled campus visits. This will allow faculty to express concerns more directly and begin a dialogue that might ultimately allow some input in discussions about benefits.
The first meeting is to be scheduled in December. Much remains to be done in this area as the University (despite having unique needs) is only one of the State Budget and Control Board’s constituents, and the Board has other budget concerns that lead it to make cost control the primary factor in decisions.

**Tuition Aid for Faculty Children**

The Committee began to investigate the concern that available tuition aid for faculty (primarily Life Scholarships and Palmetto Fellowships) had not kept pace with increasing tuition costs, putting faculty at a disadvantage in sending their children to USC and leading both prospective and current faculty to consider other institutions that offered this benefit. Moreover, the gap between Life scholarships and the actual cost of tuition, books and board, may increase if a North Carolina lottery siphons off some of the South Carolina lottery profits used for the scholarships. Committee members noted that parents are concerned that students graduating from USC might carry significant debt in educational loans. Given this situation, tuition remission could be a major asset as USC moves forward on an unprecedented hiring campaign. Initial discussions focused on actual costs, Life Scholarships and available monies for students. The Committee met with Cindy Peachey of Financial Aid to get a sense of the issues involved. We thank her for her time and willingness to respond to our queries, and also Don Jordan for his help in setting up the meeting.

The Committee then drafted questions for a survey to be sent to the 1,435 full-time faculty on the Columbia campus in order to get some sense of faculty concerns. The survey was put in final form with the help of Robert Oldendick of the Institute of Public Research, who distributed it and interpreted the results. The survey brought an excellent response--over 40% when 20% is considered a very good response. The Committee’s thanks to Tim Mousseau who took on the task of sending an email reminder to faculty that almost doubled the response rate. The survey began with a broad question intended to elicit what faculty members consider to be the most important issues in recruitment and retention. These proved to be, in order of importance: salaries, the campus environment (which inspired enthusiasm about future plans for improvement AND despair over problems stemming from deferred maintenance of existing facilities), support for research, and benefits. All of these issues were cited by more than 20% of respondents. Tuition aid fell into a second category. Oldendick reported that “Tuition waivers were the first concern listed by 2.0% of respondents, and the issue comprised 3.9% of the total responses, and 9.2% named it as one of their concerns.” Complicating the issue, respondents were almost evenly split in their assessment of whether tuition remission for faculty dependent children would increase retention. (50.1% saying it would, to 49.9% saying it would make no difference, although 57% of those with children said it meant they would be more likely to remain at USC). The Committee will need to work through the survey more carefully to decide how to pursue this issue.

**Parental leave**

The Committee feels that the University should have a policy concerning parental leave. The current situation is a patchwork of negotiations between individual faculty
members and their Chairs and Deans. The default benefit is assured by the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows a maximum of 12 weeks of leave, which must be taken as sick leave or Leave without Pay. This leads some younger faculty women to exhaust their sick leave in order to continue their health insurance and other benefits. If sick leave is exhausted, the new parent must then go on Leave Without Pay, which imposes an extra financial burden on new parents because it obliges those on leave to pay what would otherwise have been the University’s share of their health insurance premiums. Moreover, it is not possible for a University couple to pool their accumulated sick leave, as the husband can not donate his accumulated sick leave to his wife. This issue is complicated, as are all Health insurance issues, and the Committee needs more information before it can attempt to put forward a proposal, despite the need for a coherent and equitable policy.

Other Items brought to the Committee.

- Requests for information about status of the Gateway Children’s Center, after it was sold back to the USC Development Foundation. Susie Van Huss, then President and Chief Officer of the Children’s Center, and Jerry Odom of its Board of Trustees, graciously gave an hour of their time to meet with Brant Hellwig and the Chair to explain the changes and their rationale. They indicated that what is now once again the USC Children’s Center (although it is not owned by the University but rather by the USC Development Foundation) is continuing to move toward earning accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Committee’s representatives discussed the possibility of giving priority to USC faculty on the Center’s waiting list, and this will begin next year—although the Center will need to honor commitments made to parents already on the waiting list (and siblings of current enrollees have priority as slots open). Committee representatives indicated that they see the Center as an asset to the University, and believe it would be useful to have Dr. Odom or another representative of the Children’s Center speak to the Faculty Senate about the Center and its goals. We expect that this can be arranged in the fall of 2006.

- As in previous years, the Committee was pleased to fund 250 flu shots to be distributed through the Health Center to contributors to the Family Fund.

- The Committee discussed a faculty proposal to allow faculty and staff to set up a ticketing system, a form of citizen’s patrol, to ticket parking violations, particularly in the case of illegal parking in handicap spaces. However, the Committee felt this should remain the province of the Parking Division, recognizing that any member of the faculty and staff may take the initiative to report such violations to the Parking Division.

Respectfully submitted,

Marja Warehime, Chair
Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures