

Faculty Life Committee Report for March 14, 2024, Faculty Meeting

Submitted by Arthur Cunningham, Chair

March 7, 2024

Mellby Lecture Nominations

I begin with a public service announcement: Nominate a deserving colleague for the fall [Mellby Lecture](#)! This annual honorary lecture recognizes a faculty member for “excellence characterized by comprehensiveness, intellectual rigor in both scholarship and teaching, and a creative concern for interrelationships and communication across disciplines.” The lecture is a chance for the St. Olaf community to celebrate and honor a colleague for their contributions to teaching and scholarship, and an opportunity for all of us to hear a colleague’s reflections on their work and its significance.

Nominations are due at Noon on Tuesday, April 9th. You may nominate someone collectively, with everyone in the group signing the letter of nomination, or instead have several colleagues write separate letters supporting a nomination. For more information, see the [Mellby Lecture website](#).

Now to the recent work of the Faculty Life Committee (FLC) at our February and March 5 meetings.

Department Citizenship Statements

FLC is asking each department to develop (or revise, or reaffirm) a statement outlining expectations for faculty members. The adoption of such a statement would serve the following goals:

- To prompt departments to discuss and clarify departmental expectations and practices.
- To clearly communicate departmental expectations to all new faculty members.
- To clarify the limits of departmental expectations for faculty at different categories of employment, especially part-time and terminal faculty.
- To serve as a record of departmental practice for new department chairs.

FLC members have been working since last year to produce a template that departments can use as a guide for drafting their own citizenship statements. We are now sharing that template with department chairs, and asking that they work with their department to develop or revise a citizenship statement by May 31 of this year.

The concern that led to this request and the development of the template came to FLC at the start of the 2022-23 academic year. Initially raised by non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty, the

concern is that for many faculty, the lack of clarity around some of the expectations associated with their jobs can be a source of anxiety. Of particular concern are expectations not falling under any college-wide policy but instead arising from or tailored to the specific needs, practices, and traditions of individual departments. For example: Which departmental events is a faculty member expected to attend, and which are optional? Such expectations vary from department to department, but often they are not stated anywhere. Naturally, unspoken expectations are a source of anxiety for faculty concerned to live up to them. This is particularly true for new faculty, and for term faculty and pre-tenure faculty whose evaluations, and hence continued employment, depend in part on their being perceived as “good departmental citizens.” The FLC’s identified solution to this situation is to make the unspoken spoken, by having departments develop (or revise, or reaffirm) a departmental citizenship statement spelling out departmental expectations.

In order to make this task easier, and to offer some guidance about what topics to cover on a departmental citizenship statement, the FLC has developed a template with a list of suggested topics as well as some suggested language for many of these topics. We hope the list of suggested topics will be useful as an outline or checklist that departments can use as a starting point for their discussions when developing, revising, or reaffirming their citizenship statements.

The request for departments to develop a citizenship statement is not new. Somewhere around 10 years ago, the FLC invited departments to talk about and draft departmental citizenship statements, and many, perhaps most, departments on campus did so. In fall of 2022, the FLC solicited existing citizenship statements from departments, and reviewed them. Those existing citizenship statements verified our sense that different departments have different local citizenship expectations and demonstrated that there was a great deal of variation in what was included in the document. That bank of existing citizenship statements informed our development of an expanded template.

One thing we noted about many of those older citizenship statements: In many cases there was little attention to specifying whether expectations differed for full-time versus part-time faculty or for tenure-track versus NTT faculty, for example. This time around, our request for departmental citizenship arises in part from a particular concern that expectations should be made clear for NTT and part-time faculty. Hence the template states that departments should specify when expectations differ for faculty falling into these categories: tenured/tenure track, teaching specialist/special appointment, term faculty (≥ 0.5 FTE), and terminal faculty (< 0.5 FTE).

[Here is the current template.](#) It has been developed by many members of FLC both this year and last year, and has undergone several rounds of revision in response to feedback, including feedback from the Dean’s Council and the Academic Leadership group. We hope you find it

useful! You are free to adapt it as you see fit, and to craft your own language for any items you wish. This template is intended to be a tool, not a policy provided by FLC. At this point, we would invite feedback only in the form of specific suggestions for revision. You can send such suggestions to the FLC chair, Arthur Cunningham.

Remote Teaching Guidelines

After some deliberation, FLC agreed that there should be college-wide guidelines about restricting remote instruction to exceptional situations: when illness or weather prevent in-person teaching, for example, or when the particular day's activities make remote instruction preferable (say, a class discussion with a guest speaker joining via Zoom). This is not so much to address any existing widespread problem of overuse of remote instruction, but to reaffirm our commitment to in-person teaching. We wish to head off the possible "creep" of more routine reliance on remote instruction. Hence we bring to the March faculty meeting a resolution proposing an item for the faculty handbook with guidelines for remote instruction.

Guidelines for Office Hours

We discussed whether there should be college-wide guidelines for office hours (how many office hours should an instructor hold each week?). FLC decided there is enough reason for variation in practice here that such guidelines would be better left to departments. We included an item on office hours in the template for departmental citizenship statements.

Future Dates of Note

- Tuesday, April 9th at noon - Mellby Lecturer nomination deadline
- Wednesday, April 10th at noon - NEH Summer Stipend internal application deadline
- April 16, 7:30 pm - Social Justice Award Address by Rehanna Kheshgi & Reception - Sun and Gold Ballrooms

The Faculty Life Committee (FLC) meets most Tuesdays from 3:30-5:00 in TOH 300. Please contact the chair, Arthur Cunningham (cunninga@stolaf.edu) or any other member of the committee with questions, comments or suggestions for the FLC. Comments, questions, or concerns may also be submitted to the FLC via the [Faculty Comment Form](#).

Current Membership

Arthur Cunningham (Chair), *Humanities*

Adam Berliner, *Natural Sciences & Mathematics*

Tracey Engleman, *Fine Arts*
Kristina Thalhammer, *Social Sciences*
Joanne Quimby, *Interdisciplinary & General Studies*
Marc David, *At-large*
Eric Cole, *At-large*
Dana Scopatz, *At-large*
Erica Kanewischer, *At-large*
Sravya Kondrakunta, *At-large*
Jason Engbrecht, *Associate Provost (Ex-officio)*
Mike Berthelsen, *Vice President and CFO (Ex-officio)*
Marci Sortor, *Provost and Dean of the College (Ex-officio)*
Susan Rundell Singer, *President (Ex-officio)*