

# Faculty Life Committee Report for May 9, 2024, Faculty Meeting

Submitted by Arthur Cunningham, Chair

May 2, 2024

The Faculty Life Committee met on April 23 and April 30. At these meetings, we:

- looked at data about faculty salaries and discussed our recommendation for distributing the faculty salary increase pool
- decided to re-open Mellby lecture nominations until May 3 at noon
- reviewed two internal applications for 2025 NEH summer stipends
- discussed concerns about burdens on faculty who lead off-campus J-term courses

## Recommendation for distributing the faculty salary increase pool

Each year, the Faculty Life Committee is responsible for recommending to the President how the funds allocated for faculty salary increases should be distributed among the faculty. We have not yet learned what the total amount allocated for faculty salary increases will be. That amount will be approved by the Board of Regents at the May meeting (in the next day or two, at the time I write this report). Note that FLC does *not* have a role in determining the total amount allotted for faculty salary increases, but only in making a recommendation about how the salary increase pool should be distributed across the faculty.

- **For the past several years**, FLC has recommended a flat percentage increase for all faculty. For example, last spring the amount budgeted for faculty salary increases for 2023-24 was 3% of the total faculty salary pool (+0.5% for promotions and adjustments), and FLC recommended that it be distributed as a 3% salary increase for all faculty.
- **This year**, we are going to recommend something different. Thanks to the work of a subcommittee, we have identified some compression within the faculty salary distribution data that we think should be remedied. Basically, there are some segments of the faculty whose salaries have not risen as much over time as others. We plan to recommend that a portion of the faculty salary increase pool be earmarked to address that compression. In short, we plan to recommend that the majority of the faculty salary increase pool be distributed as a flat percent increase across all the faculty, with a relatively small portion being distributed as an additional small salary increase to faculty who fall within the “compression zone” in the distribution data.
- **We expect to present FLC’s recommendation at the May 9 faculty meeting**, after the Board of Regents approves a total amount allocated for faculty salary increases. A recommendation based on the approach we have discussed is being drafted, and we expect to finalize our recommendation at our May 7 FLC meeting, in time to share it with you at the May 9 faculty meeting.

As part of our discussions of faculty salary data, CFO Mike Berthelsen reviewed with us comparison data showing how St. Olaf faculty salaries compare to faculty salaries at a set of comparable institutions - a group of 20 selective or highly-selective liberal arts colleges across the country, with comparable financial resources to St. Olaf (10 above us, and 10 below us). The main takeaway from that comparison data is that St. Olaf faculty salaries fall pretty nearly in the middle of those of our comparison class institutions.

#### Concerns about burdens on faculty who lead off-campus J-term courses

FLC had a wide-ranging discussion about concerns brought to us, centering around the additional labor required for leading J-term courses off campus. Here's a summary of the concerns we discussed: J-terms are considered 1 course, but require significant additional preparation time and significantly more time during the course than an on-campus class would require - with faculty providing more teaching and activity contact hours than on-campus courses, as well as generally being "on" 24/7 for the duration of the program. In recent years, faculty leading students abroad are dealing with more student mental health issues and emotional issues while on these terms abroad. The stipend faculty receive for leading study abroad covers food and local transportation while away, but doesn't cover expenses associated with maintaining a home or additional childcare that might be needed for faculty to be gone.

In addition to these burdens on faculty leading the courses, we discussed concerns about the roles and compensation for staff and faculty who accompany the courses as "program assistants" or "mentees". (A faculty "mentee" is a second faculty member who comes along on a study-abroad trip to "learn the ropes," in preparation for leading the program in a future year.) Mentees get travel and food expenses paid but no FTE credit for their time away or for assisting with the program. For some programs requiring program assistants, it is becoming more difficult to find faculty or staff who can participate as assistants.

Jodie Malmgren from the Smith Center was one of the guests who participated in the discussion. She told us that the Smith Center is aware of many of these concerns, and discussed some of the reasons they are difficult to resolve. For example, the college cannot offer more FTE for leaders of abroad programs simply because of the large amount of additional resources that would require. And legal and HR considerations generally prevent the college from paying stipends to people not already employed by the college to assist with study abroad programs.

## Announcements

### Update on citizenship statement submissions:

As you know, the Faculty Life Committee has asked all departments on campus to develop, revise, or reaffirm a statement outlining departmental expectations for faculty in your department by the end of May. Here's the update: **Department chairs will be asked to submit their department's citizenship statement by including it with the department's annual report that is due during the summer.** (A place to upload the citizenship statement will be added to the departmental annual report form.)

We recognize that for some departments drafting an entirely new statement this spring, the statement you have in hand by the end of the semester may be a work in progress, requiring further work in the fall. FLC thanks everyone who has contributed to the work of developing their department's citizenship statement this spring.

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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](mailto: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 of the Faculty Life Committee

### Elected Faculty Representatives

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*

### Ex-Officio Members

Jason Engbrecht, *Associate Provost*

Mike Berthelsen, *Vice President and CFO*

Marci Sortor, *Provost and Dean of the College*  
Susan Rundell Singer, *President*