Members Present: Ricardo Alfaro (Chair), Darryl Baird, Connie Creech, Blair Davis, Aviva Dorfman, Jan Furman, Doug Knerr, and Greg Laurence

Ricardo called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – October 1, 2015 ► The Minutes of October 1 were approved as corrected.

Resolution on Faculty Leadership Positions ► Much discussion took place regarding the draft resolution, “Academic Affairs Advisory Committee Resolution on Assignment of Administrators to Faculty Leadership Positions.” The explanation given for drafting such a resolution came from the recent appointment of administrators to serve as chairs of three academic departments as an interim because of various issues. The following comments were made and/or discussed:

- Some felt that, with an associate dean or associate provost also serving as interim chair, it was a conflict of interest in terms of reporting and thought was it was somewhat unethical.
- The question of how voting within a department would be handled in a situation where the associate dean or associate provost was serving as interim chair was discussed. Some felt that it would be problematic especially on a topic that may be controversial and/or where the faculty in the department may be split on a particular issue.
- Some felt that there were faculty members in some of the departments that would have been qualified and/or willing to accept the responsibility and that the appointment of an administrator should only be made in a very extreme circumstance.
- Jan Furman suggested some alternate language at the beginning of the resolution as follows:

  AAAC strongly recommends the appointment of peer faculty to interim chair and director positions. Administrative appointments in such cases pose, the committee believes, serious conflicts of interest and potentially undermine the exercise of academic freedom and initiative.

- Doug explained that there are two administrative distinctions, one with a “line of instruction” such as Chair, Dean, Associate Dean, etc. and the other is staff administration, such as Associate Provost or Senior Vice Provost, etc. and that makes a difference.
- There was concern among the faculty of how having an administrator serve as interim chair/director may have a negative consequence on promotion and/or tenure for certain faculty members.
• Academic initiative can be affected by someone who has more power than a chair was mentioned.
• There was agreement that Jan would provide Ricardo with some additional language suggestions for the remainder of the resolution to share with the Committee. Some additional items that will be included are as follows: duties, title, term, and plan of action. Ricardo will forward to the Committee for an electronic vote.
• Once the resolution is approved, AAAC will submit it to the Provost as a recommendation. Faculty Council representatives will inform that committee as well and the resolution will become an official part of the AAAC Minutes.

**Provost Update**

Doug provided an update regarding the Dean Searches indicating that the bio reviews were recently completed with the CAS Committee recommending that 10 candidates be moved forward for airport interviews and the SHPS Committee recommending that 5 candidates be moved forward. Doug explained that he will be attending airport interviews to meet with each of the candidates making them feel welcomed and to help promote the University, college/school.

Doug indicated that in order to bring more transparency into the budget planning process, open forums will be provided so that the campus community can see how the model works in an effort of providing a better understanding.

Doug indicated that representatives from Student Government met with the Council of Deans and he would like them to present to AAAC as well in a future meeting which is being planned. He thanked faculty for their work with promotion and tenure and said that that process is moving forward smoothly.

Doug mentioned that a joint meeting with the Council of Deans and AAAC is being planned. He envisions that one take place perhaps every semester. He said that the goal of the meeting will be to create a line of understanding and communication regarding both roles. He said that he would like the meeting to include the dialogue of a couple of issues. Someone suggested that the “role of chairs” might be a good topic; Doug concurred.

**Discussion of Online Evaluations**

Ricardo reported that Deb White and Nick Gasper will be attending the next AAAC Meeting to provide some insight regarding why the student evaluation return rate is so low and report on what other institutions are doing in order to increase participation. Much discussion took place.

Blair was asked for the students’ perspective in regard to why students don’t complete student evaluations. Blair indicated that some of the reasons might be that students are bombarded with surveys – he has had as many as 20 requests to complete surveys; he said that students don’t read their email and suggested using social media; some students are not compelled to share information that will help future courses, but rather, are only interested in their own; and students don’t feel motivated to complete them. He felt that the big reason was “survey exhaustion”.

Jan said that we are starting at the end and perhaps we should be looking at it in retrospect. Why do we want student evaluations? She indicated that when something is this difficult to achieve, there is some essential problem. Students cannot be invested in improving instruction in that way. Doug added by asking do we want as an institution to look at them for longitudinal purposes; what do we want to know from them.
Ricardo asked the Committee to formulate questions that they would like to ask Deb and Nick as they prepare their presentation; they are as follows: faculty wondered how the surveys go to students; how are they addressed; what do they look like when students receive them. They are interested in best practice and what other institutions are doing who have a higher return rate.

**Faculty Council Report** Greg reported that last year, a question appeared on the Code ballot concerning whether students could vote who sat on governing faculty committees. It did not pass and he was asked to see if AAAC would be interested in seeing it on the ballot again. The consensus was that they would like to see the question on the ballot again.

The meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

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**Action:** Following the meeting via an email vote of AAAC members, a “Resolution from the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee of the University of Michigan-Flint” was approved as of October 26, 2015, and is included as a permanent part of the official minutes.

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**Resolution from the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee of the University of Michigan-Flint.**

The Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) strongly recommends the appointment of peer faculty to interim chair and director positions when such needs arise. The committee advises against the appointment of administrators as interim chairs and directors whenever possible. Having administrators in these roles, the committee believes, creates serious risks of conflicts of interest and may even undermine the free expression of ideas and opinion among faculty and staff in the affected departments. Both departments and administrators should be shielded from any bias that might result from an individual’s potentially conflicting obligations of chair, on the one hand, and administrator, on the other.

When a peer professor or, in extraordinary circumstances, an administrator, is asked to serve as interim department or program head on a temporary basis, the AAAC recommends the development of clearly articulated guiding principles for the interim appointment that include the term of service, voting rights, leadership duties and responsibilities, and other appropriate conditions of the appointment.

In accord with these recommendations, the AAAC requests that leadership in the three departments of the College of Arts and Sciences currently being chaired by administrators undergo a careful review and that a serious effort be made to appoint tenured peer faculty as interim chairs in those departments as soon as possible.

Ricardo Alfaro, Chair AAAC

October 26, 2015