Minutes--October 17, 2003

Present: Alice Christ, Richard Furst, Raju Govindarajulu, Kathi Kern, Mitzi Johnson, Ernest J. Yanarella (Chair) and Jeff Dembo (Ex Officio)

The meeting commenced at 1:10PM.

The chair distributed an agenda via email that outlined the various equity and benefit concerns he had identified in previous discussions and email contributions and exchanges. This list became the framework within which discussion took place.

Considerable discussion ensued among committee members over issue #1-the target goal. Many members favored the Strategic Plan target of reaching 90% of the median of benchmarks by 2005, suggesting that it would still require approximately $8.8 million in recurring funds to meet this target. One committee member proposed looking at all Research I institutions, rather than just UK's benchmarks. It seemed clear that majority opinion on the committee favored the Strategic Plan target, but with the stipulation that it not be accomplished merely or primarily by raising already comparatively high salaries. The clear committee majority believed that equity considerations dictated that meeting the goal should not be achieved by maintaining or exacerbating prevailing salary differentials across college and departments. M. Johnson raised the issue of where the benefits portion of grants generated by faculty from external sources went?

The second issue of rigid vs. Flexible DOEs was considered without consensus for supporting any uniform policy regarding flexible DOEs. R. Furst pointed out the problem of what to do with faculty members nearing the end of their academic career. The issue was raised about the possibility of untenured RTS faculty seeking to revise their DOE in order to enhance their chances for promotion and tenure. A discussion followed of one mechanism--the "relative value units" (RUVs)--being used as one means for quantifying activities.

Other committee members pointed out the absurdity of miniscule service percentages for women and faculty of color who are in high demand for committee assignments.

R. Govindarajulu presented his statistics on the number of faculty who have experienced salary inversion. These statistics were questioned by several committee members and M. Johnson disputed the significance of her estimate from the statistics offered that on 49 or 1200 faculty members were "victims" of salary inversion. This issue spilled over into email exchanges about the exact number and import of faculty experiencing salary inversion. This discussion seemed to lead to growing consensus that the market rate for each field and rank would be a useful standard for distributing the aggregate 90% of benchmark median in the Strategic Plan.

The question of the experience of institutions of higher education with unionized
faculty was raised in this context. One member pointed to the Rutgers State University experience, while another mentioned the University of Cincinnati. This issue was raised to determine if universities with faculty unions were able to better grapple with COLA raises and like-minded concerns. No clear inferences or outcome derived from this discussion, though it was suggested that UK's experience was that "money flows upwards, not downwards," thus undercutting efforts to address the kind of equity concerns this committee in part was seeking to address. A parting comment was that "merit increases" or salary increase as average salary percentages should pass the "truth in advertising" test--i.e., such figures released by the administration and communicated to faculty and the general public in newspaper stories should accurately reflect what faculty on average receive, not the gross percentage before dean and chair discretionary funds are pulled out.

The meeting concluded at 3:10PM.