

**Recommendation on Proposal to Create Research Track Faculty (Policy 2.210)**  
Faculty Welfare and Professional Responsibilities Committee (FWPR)  
February 2010

**General Recommendation:** FWPR supports the policy to create Research Track Faculty ("Research Faculty"). The new policy will increase faculty research productivity, enhance the flexibility of the faculty and the institution, help recruit high-quality faculty, and raise the University's overall faculty/research profile. The costs of implementing the policy may be significant but do not outweigh the policy's benefits. Nevertheless, key administrative, professional, and financial/budgetary questions are not fully addressed by this proposal. The University must address the issue of Research Faculty citizenship (voting rights, participation in governance, teaching/service opportunities). Furthermore, the University must adequately fund and support Research Faculty without diverting resources from current faculty and academic operations. FWPR does not support this policy if it is implemented by diverting resources from current faculty and academic operations. The Senate and the Administration must continue to collaborate to ensure successful implementation of the new research track.

**Rationale for Creating Research Track Faculty**

The purpose of creating Research Faculty is to increase faculty research productivity, enhance the flexibility of the faculty and the institution, help recruit high-quality faculty, and raise the University's overall faculty/research profile. Research Track Faculty will be expected, for the most part, to "pay their way" by securing external grants to support their research activities. The costs to the institution should be small, though not insignificant, during the early phases of the policy's implementation, since it is likely that the University will employ relatively few Research Faculty members. The creation of the Research Track will provide a useful hiring tool that may help expand the University's talent pool and may be useful for academic units outside the sciences seeking to attract talented faculty that could not otherwise be hired. Hiring Research Faculty will likely expand the volume of external grants in University's portfolio. Other institutions that aspire to enhance their faculty profile, increase research productivity, and expand their grant portfolios create research faculty tracks that are similar to those proposed by Policy 2.210.

The University currently employs Research Scientists, which are ranked as Assistant, Associate, and Senior Research Scientists. Research Faculty will differ from Research Scientists. Research Scientists are not members of the WKU faculty, typically work under the direction and supervision of WKU faculty, and are not necessarily responsible for securing external funding and grants. Research Faculty will be members of the WKU faculty, will work independently, and will be responsible for securing external funding and grants to support their research activities.

**Revisions to Proposed Policy 2.210**

FWPR and the Administration have worked together to revise and refine the Research Faculty proposal. A draft of the latest version of Policy 2.210 is attached to this recommendation is presented to the Senate for consideration.

## **Recommendations on Issues to be Resolved and Addressed during Implementation of Policy**

Although FWPR supports the creation of Research Faculty, FWPR does not support policy 2.210 unless the University addresses the following issues.

1. The University must maintain the “tripartite” professoriate. WKU must continue to uphold norm for the professoriate, i.e., that all members of the WKU faculty should engage in the research, teaching, and service. Although Research Faculty members will occupy themselves primarily with research, the University must create opportunities for them to participate in the broader intellectual, cultural, and scholarly life of the campus, as all faculty members are expected to do. Such opportunities might include the presentation of their research at colloquia or in public lectures, mentoring students, and teaching. It is also desirable that the University maintain the diversity of the faculty at the University, College, and department/academic unit level.

2. The Faculty must extend to Research Faculty certain voting rights and create opportunities for Research Faculty to participate in faculty governance. It is important that each college, and perhaps the WKU’s faculty as a whole, devise Research Faculty governance and voting rights standards that can be applied equitably and uniformly across academic units. All members of the faculty must have some voting rights and be offered the opportunity to participate in faculty governance. Although it is logical and correct that Research Faculty, whose primary duty is research, will not vote on certain matters, it is crucial that the right to participate in faculty governance activities be extended to Research Faculty whenever possible.

3. The University must establish uniform, equitable standards and procedures for Annual Reviews and Mentorship of Research Faculty. It is essential that standards and procedures for annual reviews of Research Faculty be coordinated at the college and university level so that equitable, uniform standards and procedures are established and applied across academic units. It is also desirable that academic units that hire Research Faculty establish formal mentoring systems to ensure that the process of feedback and response between academic units and Research Faculty is maintained and addresses issues like job performance and evaluation standards.

4. The University must find new sources of funding for the implementation of the Research Faculty Tracks and assure equitable access to department/academic unit, college, and university resources. Although Research Faculty members will fund themselves primarily through external grants, the University will have to commit new resources to support their work. The University will have to provide facilities, work space, materials, equipment, support staff, occasional “bridge funds,” and other support for Research Faculty. Policy 2.820 (Policy on Distribution of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Funds) creates a new funding stream that should be adequate to support the work of Research Faculty.

Consequently, the University must not divert resources from existing faculty and academic operations to fund Research Faculty activities. Furthermore, the University must devise policies that maintain equitable access by all faculty members to department/academic unit, college, and university resources.

5. Given the issues raised in the first four points, the Faculty and the Administration must work together to decide if/how Research Faculty member’s unique duties, rights, and responsibilities will be written

into the Faculty Handbook and/or Department and College rules. These questions – and possibly others – will need to be answered (Handbook sections in parentheses):

- (II.B.) What rules will govern Research Faculty outside employment and/or consulting?
- (II.B.) How exactly may/must Research Faculty participate in departmental and college business?
- (II.J.) Are Research Faculty required to participate in Convocation and Commencement?
- (II.R) Are Research Faculty expected to participate in extracurricular activities?
- (XI.A.) Are Research Faculty eligible for faculty awards?
- (XI.B.) Are Research Faculty eligible for sabbatical leaves and leaves of absence?
- (XI.F.) Are Research Faculty eligible for internal funding?

The University Senate must also decide what rights and privileges Research Faculty will be granted. FWPR recommends that the University Senate grant Research Faculty the same rights and privileges as other full-time faculty.