

PSC MINUTES – OCTOBER 24, 2016

Present: Jennifer Neighbors, Denise Depres, Garrett Milam, Amanda Mifflin, Suzanne Holland, Matt Warning, Kris Bartanen, Fred Hamel

1. Minutes from the Oct. 10 meeting were discussed and approved.
2. We discussed the first of two requests for PSC interpretation. The PSC was asked to rule on whether a head officer can submit a “minority report” on an evaluation in which there is no clear majority or minority – in other words, in the case of a tie vote. See Faculty Code Chapter III, Section IV, Subsection b (1) (c) -- currently on page 13.
 - a. Dean Bartanen recused herself from the discussion.
 - b. The committee ruled that a minority report is allowed in this case. There is nothing in the code to preclude a minority report from being filed in the situation of a tie vote. A tie vote also typically means that a department cannot recommend a positive evaluation – in effect a negative conclusion. In this sense, “minority” in the identified code section refers to the fact that the head officer disagrees with the prevailing conclusion. The committee discussed whether this role gives the head officer too much power in an evaluation, but concluded that it offers reasonable protection, or check and balance, for the evaluatee, as the head officer may have important contextual information to place the vote in context for the FAC.
 - c. The committee suggested that it would be valuable to revisit the language of the code in this section to ensure the utmost clarity on the role of the head officer.
3. The PSC was also asked to clarify the following language in the Faculty Evaluation and Procedures document (p.4): “Newly approved departmental criteria for evaluation, tenure, and promotion normally take effect at the beginning of the next academic year following PSC approval.” The committee was asked whether new evaluation procedures which “take effect” at a certain date (e.g. August 2016) apply to all evaluations which arise during that year. The issue is that some evaluatees may have been hired under, or assuming, different evaluation standards – such that to evaluate on a newly approved set of standards and procedures effectively “moves the goalposts.”
 - a. The PSC asserted that the word “normally” in the identified language in the Faculty Evaluation and Procedures document allows flexibility for departments to apply criteria in a way that is fair and consistent with what an evaluatee has understood or under which the evaluatee has pursued the evaluation.
 - b. The committee noted that if a variation from “current” criteria occurs – e.g. if older criteria are grandfathered for an evaluatee – it is essential for the department to include in its summary of deliberations which set of criteria were used and the rationale for using those criteria.
 - c. The PSC advised that, at the time when changes to evaluation procedures take place, it is important for a department to document the process used in making revisions and who specifically was involved, which allows a way to track how specific criteria came about, if questions arise at a future date.

- d. The PSC decided to include on its imminent memo, regarding the Review Cycle for Departmental Evaluation Standards, the following reminder: “Do you have upcoming evaluations that might raise question as to which evaluation standards will be employed? How might these criteria be clarified as early as possible?”
 - e. The committee discussed a ‘worst case’ scenario, assuming that a department could not agree on which evaluation criteria to employ. In this case, the department should appeal to the PSC for a ruling.
4. We began to review of the Environmental Policy and Decision-Making (EPDM) department’s evaluation standards.
- a. The committee reviewed the language of the first sections of the document (up to section IV, Procedures) and came up with recommendations to bring to the department.
 - b. We will complete our recommendations at the next meeting.
5. Final Announcements
- a. As the meeting ended, we were asked to review a handout with a proposal from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Faculty Code/Title IX. Committee members should review the handout for the next meeting and consider their responses to the proposed language.
 - b. Committee members were encouraged to attend this week’s Wednesdays at 4 session, which will focus on the issue of documented bias in faculty evaluations.

Minutes by Fred Hamel