

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee
April 18, 2012

Present: Geoffrey Block, Alva Butcher (Chair), Leon Grunberg, Andrew Rex, Doug Sackman, and Seth Weinberger

The Chair called meeting to order at 11:02. Minutes from the April 11 meeting were approved.

Seth reported to the committee on his presentation of our two recent Faculty Code interpretations to the Senate on Monday, April 16. The Senate accepted without discussion our interpretation regarding the “stop the clock” provisions of the university’s family and medical leave policy. The Senate raised a question regarding our second interpretation, which states that tenure-line faculty and career instructors should participate fully in evaluation of colleagues but that adjunct and visiting faculty should not. The question pertained to the meaning of “participate,” because some departments allow adjuncts and visitors to attend evaluation deliberation meetings without speaking or voting. The PSC decided that this question is worthy of future discussion. But it decided to defer that discussion until next year, so that the proposed Code interpretation can move to the Board of Trustees for consideration at its May meeting.

The committee then moved to discuss the subcommittee report on Senate charge #4: “Review how the following Campus Policy regarding consensual sexual relationships is applied with respect to supervisory responsibility and evaluation....” The committee agreed that no faculty member should participate in the evaluation of a colleague with whom he or she is in such a relationship. The committee also agreed that no faculty member should participate in a hiring process, if the faculty member is in a consensual sexual relationship with a candidate in the hiring pool. The committee then discussed whether a faculty member should assume the role of chair if he or she were in a consensual sexual relationship with a colleague in the department, because the supervisory duties of the chair (other than faculty evaluation) might result in conflicts of interest. We agreed that it would be impractical and unfair to prohibit a faculty member from assuming the role of chair in such situations. Further, many of the duties of the chair are purely administrative and not supervisory, and in such cases a conflict of interest would normally not arise. However, we would caution a chair to avoid assuming any supervisory role over a colleague with whom he or she was in a sexual relationship. In such a case, we would advise the chair to invoke alternative processes in order to avoid a possible conflict of interest. Seth volunteered to draft for the committee’s consideration a Code interpretation to reflect these findings.

The meeting adjourned at 11:44.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Rex