

University of Puget Sound
Professional Standards Committee
October 17, 2012, 8:30 AM, Wyatt 226

Members present: Kris Bartanen, Jennifer Hastings, Pat Krueger, Andreas Madlung, Doug Sackman, Kurt Walls, and Seth Weinberger (chair).
Guest: Peggy Perno, Director of Disability Services

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by Seth Weinberger.

I. Approval of minutes of 10-4-12

Minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Course evaluations and students with disabilities

Peggy Perno, Director of Disabilities Services, was invited to the meeting to address the issue of students with a disability needing more time to fill out a student evaluation of an instructor than is normally allotted when the evaluations are filled out in class.

Perno noted that there may be many cases when a student may need more time, for example, in the case of a student with dyslexia when additional time may be needed to read questions and assure that errors aren't made; it is certainly in the interest of the student as well as the faculty to have the evaluation administered in a way that is optimal for the student. Perno also noted that the fact that this issue has been raised indicates that students are taking the evaluation seriously, which is a good sign. It was proposed that, like a quiz, students would be allowed to do the evaluation at the disabilities office. There was some discussion of the feasibility and desirability of going to an on-line survey format, but there was skepticism that that would be a good alternative and in any event it was deemed beyond the limits of the topic at hand. The practicalities of making this option available to students were discussed. It was decided that the Office of Disability Services will find a way to send notices to students with disabilities, and that it may set up a common time or times when students could go to their office to fill out course evaluations.

III. "University of Puget Sound Policy for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct"

A written response from legal counsel to the questions posed by PSC coming out of its September 26 meeting, centering on timetables and other matters, was distributed. Seth and Kris will incorporate language suggested.

IV. Senate Charge: "Clarify (a) expectation for junior (tenure-line) faculty participation in evaluations of departmental colleagues, and (b) if a written recommendation is required of junior faculty in a change of status review (promotion, tenure)."

A wide-ranging discussion was begun on this issue. The committee considered the Code, specifically examining Chapter 3, Section IV, a. (1) (c): "Departmental colleagues participating in the evaluation write letters. The letters of colleagues shall be substantive

assessments of the evaluatee's performance based on the factors in paragraph (b). When the evaluatee is eligible for a change in status, the letters shall forward the writers' independent recommendations."

The committee agreed that, according to its reading of the Code, so-called "junior faculty" (a status that is not itself defined in the Code) are in fact required to participate fully and equally with other colleagues in the evaluation process. It also noted that this may be at variance with departmental practice or custom. It was further noted that there may be compelling reasons to excuse junior faculty from making a recommendation, including the case where a new faculty hire participates in an evaluation in his or her first months on campus, with very little knowledge of the norms, culture, and standards of the department and institution. The question was raised as to whether the Code might be interpreted to allow such excusals from the requirement to make a recommendation. The committee debated whether or not a right existed within the Code for faculty to "abstain" from making a positive or negative recommendation in the case of change of status reviews, either in the letter or in the departmental deliberation stage. The role and procedure of the FAC in cases where a file is received from a department in which one or more faculty members has abstained from making a recommendation was discussed; the FAC may in such cases go back to the department for clarification. It was also suggested that, regardless of whether or not a right to abstain exists within the Code, if a department or program expects or requires a class of faculty (such as those in their first year) to not make a recommendation, that this would be at variance with the Code.

It was agreed that the matter of abstention, and the larger question of whether or not junior faculty may be excused from making a positive or negative recommendation in evaluations under the Code, warranted further discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 9.31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Sackman

