

## 2012-13 Year-End Report of the Professional Standards Committee

The members of the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) in 2012-13 were: Kristine Bartanen (ex-officio), Douglas Cannon, Jennifer Hastings, Pat Krueger, Andreas Madlung, Doug Sackman, Kurt Walls, and Seth Weinberger (chair).

The Senate charges to the PSC were:

- 1) Review the policy on “Background Checks of Faculty” being drafted by the Human Resources Department;
- 2) Review the “Research Misconduct Policy” document and suggest changes to existing documents as needed to achieve consistency among the various response processes in the case of research misconduct;
- 3) 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);
- 4) Clarify who is responsible for ensuring adequate classroom visits by colleagues—the head officer or the evaluatee; and
- 5) Clarify whether a letter of evaluation sent directly to the Dean/Faculty Advancement Committee in an open file may be read by an evaluatee.
- 6) Continue the review of Faculty Code provisions on guidelines for the use of course assistants.

The charges were addressed as follows:

- 1) The PSC has not yet received recommendations from Human Resources; thus no action was taken on this charge. The PSC recommends that the charge be reissued for 2013-14.
- 2) The PSC approved a new Research Misconduct Policy on April 8, 2013. The new policy required a Faculty Code amendment to align the faculty’s grievance policy with the federally-required Research Misconduct Policy; the code amendment was approved by the Faculty at the meeting of April 15, 2013. The amendment will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval at the May 2013 meeting. The Research Misconduct Policy can be found here: [http://www.pugetsound.edu/files/resources/3117\\_Research%20Misconduct%20Policy.pdf](http://www.pugetsound.edu/files/resources/3117_Research%20Misconduct%20Policy.pdf). The accompanying code amendment can be found at the end of this document.
- 3) The PSC finds that the Faculty Code does not distinguish a subset of faculty colleagues designated as “junior.” The PSC interprets this to mean participation responsibilities in faculty evaluations are the same for all faculty colleagues.
- 4) The Faculty Evaluation Criteria and Procedures document on page 11, paragraph 2 states that the “final determination of adequacy rests with the head officer and the Faculty Advancement Committee.” The PSC affirms that it is the evaluatee’s

responsibility to ensure that adequate opportunities for evaluators to visit are available, but not to ensure that the visits actually occur.

- 5) The PSC modified page 20, paragraph 2 of the Faculty Evaluation Criteria and Procedures document to read “The head officer notifies departmental colleagues, and outside letter writers upon receipt of their letter, as to whether the evaluation file is open or closed. If the letter writer does not wish his/her letter to be read by an evaluatee in an open file, the letter may be altered or withdrawn.”
- 6) The PSC did not address this issue. The PSC recommends that the charge be reissued for 2013-14.

Other issues addressed by the PSC:

- 1) On September 12, 2012, the PSC approved the Department of Mathematics & Computer Science’s Statement of Evaluation Standards and Procedures.
- 2) On September 19, the PSC approved, with slight modifications, the School of Business and Leadership’s Statement of Procedures, Criteria, and Standards for Faculty Evaluation.
- 3) On September 26, the PSC approved, with slight modifications, the School of Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy’s Interdepartmental Evaluation Criteria.
- 4) On October 4, the PSC discussed the issue of students with disabilities who might require additional time to complete Instructor and Course Evaluation Forms. In consultation with the Director of Disability Services, the PSC decided that the Office of Disability Services (ODS) would send notices to students with disabilities in classes in which evaluations are required to notify them of the opportunity to complete the evaluation at ODS. It was also recommended that ODS set up a common time or times for disabled students to complete evaluations *en masse*.
- 5) On February 12, 2013, the PSC discussed whether, given evidence that few students require the full time, 20 minutes should still be allotted for course evaluations. The PSC discussed reducing the allotted time to 15 minutes, but took no action.
- 6) On February 12, the PSC discussed the possibility of moving the files of evaluatees on-line to save resources and time. The issue was tabled, pending action from the Library, Media, and Information Services committee regarding on-line processes.
- 7) On February 18, following input from the university’s legal counsel, the PSC approved a Faculty Code interpretation concerning the professional ethics of faculty and relationships of a sexual nature. The interpretation is included below and will be presented to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board for concurrence at the May 2013 meeting.
- 8) On March 25, the PSC approved an addendum to the Department of English’s evaluation criteria for the Director of the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (currently Julie Nelson Christoph).

- 9) On April 8, the PSC approved an addendum to the Department of Politics & Government's evaluation criteria for the position of Professor of Environmental Policy and Decision Making (currently Daniel Sherman).
- 10) On April 22, the PSC discussed ways to improve the evaluation process, with an eye to reducing the workloads on the Faculty Advancement Committee, the evaluatee, department chairs, and the departments. The PSC considered several options, including adding to the Faculty Evaluation Criteria and Procedures document recommended page limits for statements and letters and providing a document detailing the expectations for an evaluator's letter. The PSC recommends that the Faculty Advancement Committee be tasked with recommending page limits and detailing expectations. The PSC also discussed simplifying all streamlined reviews by eliminating the need for an evaluatee to submit a formal file. Instead, if a review is to be streamlined, it should resemble the reviews that occur during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years of employment which culminate in a "written progress report by the head officer that should be forwarded to the individual, the Faculty Advancement Committee, and the Dean." Given the end of the semester, the PSC was unable to take action and recommends that a charge is issued for 2013-14.

**Proposed charges for 2013-2014:**

- 1) Review the policy on "Background Checks of Faculty" being drafted by the Human Resources Department.
- 2) Continue the review of Faculty Code provisions on guidelines for the use of course assistants.
- 3) Formulate recommendations for streamlining the faculty evaluation process in order to reduce workload on evaluatees, departments, head officers, the Faculty Advancement Committee, and the Dean of the University. Propose amendments to the Faculty Code that are entailed by these recommendations.
- 4) The PSC recommends that the Faculty Advancement Committee be tasked with recommending page limits both for evaluatee statements and for letters of evaluation by colleagues and with detailing expectations for faculty evaluation files.

Respectfully submitted,

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Associate Professor  
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Chair, Professional Standards Committee, 2012-13

**Interpretation of Chapter I, Part C, Section 3, Chapter 1, Part D, Section 2 (e), and Chapter I, Part D, Section 4. Professional Ethics of Faculty and Relationships of a Consensual Sexual Nature.**

It is in the best interest of the university and all individuals associated with the university that there be no real or perceived bias in situations where one individual exerts influence over another colleague or staff member. Situations of direct supervision or when one has the ability to advance, promote, recommend, or in any other way directly influence the academic or work status of the colleague are the times when transparency is required.

The existence of a consensual sexual relationship constitutes a conflict of interest, and can create a real or perceived bias. Therefore, it is the policy of the university that such relationships should be disclosed when there is any possibility of a supervisory or career influencing role between the parties. When faculty or staff members enter into a consensual sexual relationship where one party has supervisory or career influence over the other, each party is required to promptly disclose the relationship to his/her superior(s) so that reassignment, alternative supervision processes, or other arrangements can be facilitated and documented.

The following scenarios are presented as examples where a faculty member must disclose the existence of a consensual sexual relationship. They are not intended to be exclusive, and faculty members should exercise judgment when faced with a similar situation.

- The evaluation process is clearly a career-influencing relationship. No faculty member should participate in the evaluation of another faculty member with whom he or she is involved in a consensual sexual relationship and all faculty members, including head officers, are expected to recuse themselves from such situations.
- Hiring decisions are also understood to involve the exercise of judgment and may result in a work- or career-influencing relationship. No faculty member should participate in the search or hiring process when a person with whom he or she is involved in a consensual sexual relationship is an applicant and all faculty members, including head officers, are expected to recuse themselves from such situations.
- The responsibilities of serving as department chair or program director may also, at times, require supervising or making decisions about the academic or work status of other departmental members. Departmental chairs should be aware of when their duties place them in a career-influencing relationship to a colleague with whom they are involved in a consensual sexual relationship. If and when such situations should arise, chairs should take care to put alternative processes in place to avoid conflicts of interest or other improprieties.

## **Amendment to the Faculty Code (passed by the Faculty at the meeting of April 15, 2013)**

### Chapter I, Part D, Section 4 - Professional Ethics

Professors are bound to observe acceptable standards of professional ethics. In general, a professor should not compromise the interests of the university or of one's students in favor of one's own. Questions related to violations of professional ethics should be handled in the following manner:

- a. **First, take steps required by public law as implemented in university policies.**
- b. **Second, when there is no relevant public law**, notify the faculty member of suspected misconduct on his or her part. There may be an explanation that resolves the matter satisfactorily.
- c. Failing to receive an explanation that is satisfactory, or not wishing to deal directly with the person that is suspected of misconduct, one should take the matter to the Chair of that person's department. (If the Chair is the person suspected of misconduct one should take the matter to the Dean.) The Chair may resolve the matter to everyone's satisfaction.
- d. If these steps do not resolve the problem, the matter should normally be referred to the Dean and handled through the grievance process as provided in Chapter VI, with the Dean responsible for filing the grievance. In the event that the Dean does not file the grievance, faculty members retain the right to do so.

Grievances must be filed according to the timeline outlined in Chapter VI.

### Chapter VI, Section 2 - Prehearing Settlement Conference

- a. Within thirty (30) working days of the alleged violation, the grievant shall give written notice thereof to the respondent; provided, that the notice may be served on the dean if the grievant is without knowledge of the **identity** of the respondent.

A grievance notice presented after thirty working days of the alleged violation will be considered only if: **(1) an alternative process is required by public law as implemented in university policies; or (2)** the grievant demonstrates that he or she did not know, or could not have known, about the alleged violation until a later time. **In the second instance**, the grievance notice must be given within thirty working days of the date upon which the grievant gained knowledge of the alleged violation.

- b. The notice shall state the relevant facts with reasonable particularity, cite those portions of the appointment contract or the faculty code alleged to be violated, and include proposed remedies.
- c. Within five (5) working days of notice the respondent shall conduct formal discussions with the grievant and other appropriate persons with the intent of reaching a satisfactory settlement of the grievance, and which, if found, shall terminate the grievance process. Any party may terminate the prehearing settlement conference if they feel that further discussions will be unsuccessful.