

MINUTES OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE, FEB. 13, 2009

PRESENT: Bartanen, Bodine, Christoph, Edgoose, Goldstein, Haltom, Tomlin, Wood

The Minutes of 1/23/09 were approved, as amended and clarified by Haltom (this approval process was carried over from the PSC meeting of 1/30/09).

The Minutes of 1/30/09 were approved.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to discussion of Charge #5: Central Tendencies and Variabilities in Department Professional Development Guidelines; Julie Christoph and Julian Edgoose (J and J) composed the subcommittee that examined this question. The discussion focused on what role should the PSC play in establishing greater consistency in the Professional Development sections of the Department Evaluation Guidelines across the University.

Based on their reading of all department guidelines, several examples were highlighted by J and J, as illustrated by the Professional Development sections that were excerpted from the Departmental Evaluation Guidelines, and distributed to the PSC. As we examined these examples, our discussion moved from the general (is it desirable, or feasible, to establish University-wide guidelines or standards in this category), to the specific (should a minimum number of peer-reviewed publications be required for granting promotion or tenure). Many issues were raised:

- 1) The increasing range of what constitutes evidence of professional growth is a complicating factor; there are now more outlets (mostly electronic in nature) for distributing professional work than in the past.
- 2) One of several "divides" that exists at the University is that between departments where a great deal of attention to individual student work (such as research theses or artistic performances, among others) is required, and those departments where those activities do not occur. This has a significant effect on the rate and nature of professional academic work that can be completed.
- 3) Since maintaining teaching excellence should always remain the core mission of all faculty, we should examine all professional work in light of how well that work supports our primary job as educators in a liberal arts, primarily undergraduate setting.
- 4) It was suggested that each department could establish a more clearly defined minimum quantity and "quality" of professional work required for tenure and promotion than presently exists (at least for many departments). One PSC member who has also served on the FAC in the past stated that the FAC already does depend on such background information to provide context for individual faculty applications for tenure and promotion. J and J cited two specific examples of departmental guidelines where

specific criteria related to external standards (to a degree) did exist. It was noted that a good model would be one in which departments provide a list of activities that would provide evidence of professional growth, but without ranking them, thus providing flexibility for faculty in shaping their careers.

Some other examples were cited, such as one department that specifies that professional growth should be in evidence during sabbaticals.

Other comments included reiterating the present potential for inequity among departmental guidelines, as well as a restatement of the case for taking care in recognizing the inherent disparity between department requirements for individual work with students.

The Chair thanked the Committee for the many thoughtful comments, but then queried, where does this leave us? The interesting possibility was raised: should all faculty write a one-page yearly summary of their professional activities, every year?

The discussion continued (with Tomlin acting as Secretary):

Departments should assess the quality of scholarship. If the criteria vary, and are hidden, it is much harder on junior faculty to know what to do. Chairs should mentor new faculty, and perhaps report to colleagues the nature of their guidance, so that all in the department are informed what had been said, at the time of the 3rd year and tenure reviews.

To shine more light on the process, the PSC discussed adding a positive paragraph to its Evaluation Standards and Guidelines document with an example: here's a successful way to apply department standards of professional development.

The first item on our Feb 20th agenda: the possibility of requesting of the Faculty Senate for a ruling on the By-Laws: If the PSC determines it would be desirable, may it decide to publish Department Guidelines on the internal internet? Dean Bartanen will also bring up the question at the next chairs' meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Goldstein