

MINUTES OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE 4/25/08

Present: Kris Bartanen, Sigrun Bodine, Julie Christoph, Julian Edgoose, Karl Fields, Barry Goldstein, Don Share, George Tomlin

Tomlin convened the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

1. Announcements:

Chair Tomlin thanked Dean Bartanen for her work on the buff document.

Edgoose reported that the Code Amendment regarding streamlined evaluations for instructors had passed at the Faculty Meeting of April 22. It will go to the Trustees at the May meeting.

Christoph noted that the idea of using a wiki for committee work had been raised at the April 23 “Wednesdays at 4” session; she suggested that next year the PSC might want to create a wiki for posting and commenting on drafts of minutes and other internal communications.

2. The minutes of 4/17/08 were approved with minor amendments.

3. Charge 9: Streamlined evaluations

Continuing the conversation from the PSC meeting of 4/17 about the inclusiveness of streamlined reviews and who can trigger a full review, the PSC agreed to add the following language to the buff document on the page titled “Alternative Evaluation Process for Associate and Full Professors,” right above the heading “Eligibility for Distinguished Professorship”:

The streamlined review process was intended to lessen the impact of the review on departmental colleagues while preserving many of the review safeguards currently in place. Thus, the evaluatee’s file is made available for colleagues, who “have the option of” reading it, but who are not required or even expected to do so (*Faculty Code*, Chapter III, Section 5.c). External letters, colleague letters from inside or outside the department, and class visits are optional. Given that any additional letters (external or internal) will not be representative of the whole department or the processes of the full review, those letters can be sent on to the dean and included in the head officer’s letter only at the discretion of the head officer. All streamlined evaluation files are open files.

4. Charge 18—Consistency between faculty appointment letters and evaluation criteria for interdepartmental appointments

The PSC revisited Charge 18, in relation to specific cases of interdepartmental appointments from the past year.

The PSC affirmed that the current practice is in keeping with the guidelines in the Code. However, because of the many special situations that can arise in interdepartmental appointments, the PSC would like to continue examining the question and will ask that Charge 18 be carried over into 2008-09.

In 2008-09, the PSC would like to consider the question of equity in evaluation, given that faculty members in interdepartmental appointments may be asked to evaluate the work of colleagues in their home departments, while those colleagues from the home department may not be on the committee evaluating the faculty member in the interdepartmental appointment.

In 2008-09, the PSC would also like to consider the question of whether guidelines about faculty appointment letters in interdepartmental appointments should be included specifically in the Faculty Recruitment Guidelines (perhaps in Section 1 and/or 15).

5. Charge 8: relationship between formal and informal challenges to the evaluation process

Subcommittee members Fields and Share reported on their conversations with past PSC members and the Dean about what is at issue in the charge.

The problem is a lack of clarity in several aspects of Chapter III, Section 4, b of the Code, including the following: whether it is possible for both formal and informal challenges to be initiated, whether informal and formal challenges are to occur sequentially or simultaneously (if, in fact, two challenges can be initiated), whether there might be multiple “go arounds” for challenges or just one, and whether there is a time limit for the resolution of an informal challenge.

The PSC discussed the difference between the time period for the formal and informal appeals, wondering whether that difference is to create space for a “cooling off” period and/or because of the time involved to convene members for a formal appeal.

A lack of parallelism was noted between the concerns on which a challenge might be based: for informal challenges, the code states that the evaluatee must notify the head officer in writing of “concerns about the departmental process and the contents of the file that are relevant to questions of fairness and adequacy,” while the informal appeal “is limited to issues affecting fairness, completeness, and adequacy of consideration by the department in conducting the evaluation.” It seems that “completeness” would also be a valid concern in an informal challenge and might, in many cases, be handled more effectively at the department level in an informal challenge.

The PSC affirmed that the spirit of the Code is that the informal challenge is preferred, when feasible, in that it is simpler (usually involving less time and fewer people). However, the PSC recognized that the 10-day time frame for initiating a challenge might, in effect, force an evaluatee to initiate a formal appeal when it appears that the informal appeal will not be resolved in time for the deadline to initiate a formal challenge.

Conducting a formal and an informal challenge simultaneously would likely hinder the chances of either or both being resolved satisfactorily.

It appears that a Code amendment is probably in order, to clarify some or all of these issues. The PSC will request that Charge 8 be folded over into 2008-09.

6. Looking ahead

At the next and final meeting of 2007-08, the PSC will review changes to the buff document and will consider what charges should be requested for 2008-09.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Submitted respectfully,

Julie Christoph