

Faculty Senate
10 March 2008

Senators present: K. Bartanen, T. Beck, N. Bristow, D. Cannon, J. Hanson, S. Holland, R. Hutchinson, J. McCullough, A. O’Neil, L. Saucedo, R. Singleton, Y. Swinth, Y. Word

Visitors present: Hart Edmonson, Priti Joshi

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 18th were approved as distributed.

The minutes of February 25th were approved with the single correction of the change from “Fisher” to “Foster” throughout the minutes.

2. Announcements

Cannon welcomed Priti Joshi, who took a leave from her leave as well as her senses to attend in order to speak on the early tenure agenda item.

Hart Edmonson introduced Yusuf Word, his replacement as ASUPS president beginning Thursday. Word suggested that he expected to be able to attend meetings, and that he looks forward to working with the Senate. Faculty Senators congratulated Word, and Cannon thanked Edmonson for his work with the Senate and his able representation of the students.

Cannon explained that he attended the Board of Trustees meeting in late February, but will wait on his report of that meeting until the Senate’s March 24 meeting, when there will be a heightened relevance due to particular agenda items.

3. Special Orders

Holland brought up the continued need for a conversation about the problem of not offering health care benefits to one-semester faculty replacements who are full-time. Holland is currently laboring next door to a colleague who is working without health care coverage, and it seems a serious issue in terms of justice, as she views it through the lens of ethics.

4. Committee Reports

Hanson reported that LMIS will be coming to the Senate to discuss a possible shift in learning management systems—from Blackboard to Moodle. Hanson will bring a fuller report to the next Senate meeting. He reminded senators that this will be an important issue for faculty, particularly those who currently use Blackboard in their courses. He encouraged faculty to get involved in this discussion early on, and also highlighted the future need for education on this new system.

Hutchinson noted that the Curriculum Committee minutes reported that our fall semester actually violated the bylaws, which require the fall semester to end by December 20th.

Saucedo reported that the Diversity Committee is in process on revisions for the bylaws regarding the shift to a new structure for that committee and its work.

5. Course Evaluations Sub-Committee

Hutchinson reported that Foster had gotten the committee moving quickly, and that Sarah Moore had joined their work, which was very useful. The sub-committee has completed a draft of a questionnaire, which Dean Bartanen has also seen. It is almost ready to go to the faculty. In clarification, Bartanen commented that she thought it looked good, but had heard two other concerns expressed in other contexts this year, and had suggested to the subcommittee they might be added to the questionnaire, in particular whether any of the wording on the form was biased with respect to race, ethnicity, and other forms of difference and also whether instructions for the evaluation form should be amended to discourage personal or potentially harassing comments. Holland added that Foster has worked with Randy Nelson on the questionnaire. In order to ensure anonymity the responses to the questionnaires will go into an Excel spreadsheet right away, and so they are separated from the responder's email address immediately.

Holland wondered if Bartanen had had a chance to check with Randy Nelson about a survey regarding faculty meeting attendance. Bartanen plans to do so in the very near future.

6. Early Tenure and Promotion

Joshi opened by reminding senators of the source of this issue. When she served on the Senate last year the question arose of whether the Senate should look at the issue of early tenure at Puget Sound. The current policy is best understood by looking at the Faculty Code. In Chapter 4, 1, e, the code suggests that tenure decisions will be made in the sixth year, but that "tenure may be granted earlier for relevant previous experience or exceptional achievement." Section f goes on to say that "Faculty members who have had full-time faculty service in other institutions before employment by the University of Puget Sound shall be evaluated for tenure at a time specified in the faculty member's initial contract. If tenure is not granted at the time specified in the initial contract, the next contract shall be terminal." In turn, Joshi called senators' attention to the PSC code interpretation of February 9, 1987, which states that in cases of early promotion or tenure the measurement is the "sustained record of achievement of exceptional merit in all categories by which a faculty member is evaluated." Joshi summarized that there are three issues she would like the Senate to consider changing. 1. The need for the option of early tenure appearing in one's initial contract. 2. The use of a higher standard for those who come up early. 3. The "up or out" requirement (that one's next contract is terminal if they come up early for tenure and are denied). These three issues, Joshi maintained, act as obstacles to people going up for early tenure. She suggested that the Senate might think about how early tenure can act as a tool of recruitment and a tool of retention, and reminded senators that the PSC has reasserted support for allowing early tenure, and that an earlier Senate also suggested the need to consider this issue.

Bartanen clarified the difference between the 1987 and 2007 interpretations for senators, explaining that the 1987 interpretation was not entirely clear with respect to tenure, and seemed largely to have to do with promotion. As a result, she asked the PSC to interpret that earlier interpretation, which they did last year. This new interpretation suggests that if someone comes up earlier than the normal six years for tenure and promotion because it is included in their initial appointment letter, then the standard is the same as regular tenure decisions. Alternatively, if they choose to come up earlier without mention of this in their initial appointment letter, then they are held to the “above and beyond” standard, set forth in the 1987 interpretation. Bartanen also explained to senators that the new interpretation has not yet gone to the Board of Trustees; instead Bartanen used the recent meeting with the trustees in order to have some of them look at the current situation on early tenure in order to get a sense of how they were thinking about this issue. A few trustees asked questions-- one asked whether perhaps the tenure standard does not need to be higher for early tenure, but also thought that the code was not entirely clear about the issue of the terminal contract. One possibility, Bartanen concluded, would be for the Senate to send this issue back to the PSC and ask them to consider the questions that have emerged.

Joshi asked whether the Senate could instead seek to revise the code, rather than asking for another interpretation, and Bartanen confirmed that this would be another route. Joshi then asked for Bartanen’s sense of what might be productive. Bartanen responded that one possibility would be to have the same standard for early or regular tenure, but that there would need to be a high stake in coming up early (i.e., the “up or out” provision). Saucedo asked about how we would prevent continual efforts if the “terminal contract” aspect was removed. Joshi confirmed that she favored striking the “up or out” clause, suggesting that it seems unlikely anyone would choose to come up repeatedly, especially because they would not want to make extra work for their colleagues and annoy them. Joshi worried that if we do not eliminate this aspect of the policy, no one will come up early. Alternatively, if the faculty were to eliminate this part of the policy, Joshi would recommend that chairs work very closely with candidates to help them assess their case. Saucedo noted that this kind of close work does not always happen, and wondered if the faculty could put something in place to prevent abuse, for instance a requirement that would make faculty wait two years before going up again. Bartanen noted that there is language in the code that precludes someone coming up, at their own request, one year after they have been evaluated. Hanson asked Joshi to follow up on the reasoning about this being a recruitment tool. Joshi noted that when she went on the market it was one of the first questions she and her colleagues were asking about. Hanson asked if this was someone fresh out of school, or rather someone with a track record. Joshi noted that most institutions let you come up whenever you like. Increasingly UPS is hiring faculty who have taught at another institution already, and so it is helpful to be able to offer this as an option during the hiring process. Holland added that increasingly we are getting a candidate pool in which we are seeing people who are ABD but have publications for instance, things we didn’t used to see, and so worried that not allowing for early tenure constitutes a competitive disadvantage in hiring. Edmonson suggested that perhaps the distinction was less about being a draw for hiring than for keeping faculty at the university. Saucedo noted that over in the sciences, also, people may arrive with significantly more experience than before, and so may be anxious to get tenure earlier.

Cannon suggested that given the way the code currently stands, the person would have to decide when they came whether they would come up early. Bristow argued for the changes to be done as a code change rather than another interpretation. Holland urged the Senate to propose something to the faculty. Singleton argued for the PSC to do it. Cannon and Bartanen noted we would need to have this figured out before sending it to the PSC in order to give them a clear charge. Hanson agreed with Bristow and Singleton. Holland also agreed. Hutchinson asked Bartanen about the trustees and the divergent views. Bartanen reiterated that some trustees she spoke with asked about whether we should be a bit more lenient in allowing people to come up early, while the PSC interpretation reinforced the idea of a higher standard. Beck asked about how to formulate a sense of the Senate on this issue. Holland moved that the “Senate send to the PSC a request to rewrite the faculty code so that it allows people to come up for early tenure.” Seconded by McCullough. Joshi suggested there are three issues here—not just the ability to come up early for tenure, but also the more complicated issue of whether a faculty member can come up regardless of his/her initial contract, whether there is a higher standard if a person does so, and whether, if that person is denied tenure, they are able to come up a second time. Holland asked that we wait to talk about the “up or out” issue separately. McCullough seconded because he thought these are issues for the PSC to discuss, rather than the Senate. McCullough explained that he can imagine good reasons to allow early tenure, but can also understand keeping the up or out clause; it would be terrible to allow people to experiment. Hanson thought it was something the Senate should talk about it. While it is the PSC’s job to write code, he believed that policy should be set by the Senate. Hutchinson asked about the Associate without Tenure rank at UPS, and suggested that he saw it as a great system to do a trial run for tenure. He was not sure he would favor letting people go up early for tenure. He might favor the up or out on early tenure also. Bartanen noted that the code currently allows people to come up early. The issues, she explained, are clarity about the standard to be used when a person comes up for early tenure. What, in other words, is the purpose for the higher standard for coming up early? O’Neil argued the contradictions of the heightened scrutiny on early tenure. Why, she wondered, would the university want to get rid of someone who was good enough for tenure if they waited until their sixth year because they were held to a higher standard by coming up early?

Holland revised her motion to include “without a standard above and beyond that normally required for promotion and tenure.” McCullough, the seconder, agreed with this friendly amendment. Cannon noted that the PSC last year felt it was charged only to explore what “achievement of exceptional merit” meant in the earlier interpretation. The PSC was not voting for anything, but rather they were simply interpreting the earlier interpretation in order to clarify it. What the Senate is doing now would be different, asking the PSC to come up with language to change the code. Bartanen referred the Senate to Chapter IV, Sec. 1, e, to reiterate that the code already allows early tenure even if it is not specified in an initial contract. Joshi noted what she saw as the apparent contradictions in the code that could confuse the reader and suggested that if the code is clear that a person can come up early regardless of initial contract, the language could be made clearer. Another friendly amendment was made to the motion: “and also to check throughout the code for any inconsistencies related to this issue and suggest corrections.” Hanson expressed concern about voting on this motion without time for deliberation or

conversation. Holland suggested it would be alright because a long deliberation process would follow if the motion passed. Bartanen also noted that asking the PSC to craft language would only be a first step. Beck wanted to comment on the wording of the motion, and asked us to change the motion to suggest that the Senate wants to ask the PSC to craft language, not revise the code. Beck also worried about the up or out clause. He expressed some awareness that people would not decide easily to come up for tenure and suggested he did not expect people to come up early and often.

M/S/P: “That the senate send to the PSC a request to craft language to change the faculty code so that it allows people to come up for early tenure without a standard above and beyond that normally required for promotion and tenure and also to check throughout the code for any inconsistencies related to this issue and suggest corrections.”

Cannon reminded the Senate that the current code specifies up or out earlier than the sixth year for people whose initial contracts have an early tenure date. It does not include this for those who come up early without it in their initial contract. In effect, then, code as it stands would allow multiple tries.

VII. Professional Growth—Standards and Evidence

Cannon took the Senate into a second weighty issue, distributing yearly reports from the FAC for the last two years. In these reports the FAC seemed to express the hope that the Senate would look into the issue of the diversity in standards used for Professional Growth by departments in the evaluation process. Cannon also quoted from an email from Senator Foster, in which she raised this question: “Lack of uniformity of standards of professional growth is a problem raised in the FAC final report and also came up in the ad hoc committee on tenure as an area of evaluation that might influence a tenure decision in way that is more subjective and difficult for an evaluator outside the department (or sometimes even inside the department) to judge. Some of the lack of uniformity is in the departmental standards, and some is in the application of those standards. This is an important topic, but in my view not a senate topic. I recommend that it be passed on to the PSC as a priority item, since it is the PSC that reviews the department standards. The senate could take a short block of time to elaborate on the reason for the charge, the outcome goals, and perhaps even identify some of the particular issues that have created problems in the past.”

Holland said that feedback from her department was that at least some members of the department would like to see clearer university standards on professional growth, and not as many divergent standards department to department. Hutchinson said in the music department this is an ongoing debate because different people do very different things and things very different from other departments. Bristow urged some restraint on standardization in order to respect disciplinary cultures. Bartanen explained that her understanding is that the issue is less what kind of professional growth but rather the standard for what is expected for professional growth—which range, for example, from currency to certain numbers of publications. Given this, standardization is not what is expected, but rather people are asking that the level of professional involvement be made more standard. Holland found that comment helpful and suggested it might be useful to think about distinctions between the sciences and the humanities. She also suggested she has never understood why we don’t have a

requirement that someone from outside the school evaluate each file, especially for full professor, and perhaps for tenure, and wondered if this reflected an inferiority complex? Finally, Holland also suggested the need for the university to do something to get rid of or to de-emphasize the role of distinguished service in the promotion decision for full professor because it is embarrassing. Saucedo felt that in reading through the reports for the FAC they were asking for the departments to be very clear about what they understand as valuable scholarship. Bartanen believed the comment from the FAC came from a discussion of what they found more and less helpful in evaluation letters. They find it helpful when colleagues explain the meaning of particular scholarly accomplishments, working to contextualize items to make them more meaningful for the FAC, readers who are not from the evaluatee's discipline. Holland asked, then, if it would be helpful to have someone from outside the university but inside the field evaluate? McCullough asked the same thing when he arrived, and Cooney replied that this was why UPS puts so much emphasis on peer-reviewed scholarship. Holland argued that this does not give the contextualization that a letter from an outside person would. Bartanen noted that this kind of documentation is not prohibited. Holland suggested she thought this would be a helpful addition for standardizing. McCullough suggested that he has always understood that faculty are supposed to evaluate against their unit's guidelines, and that it would be the PSC's job to review and require a high standard from all departments. Cannon quoted from an email from George Tomlin, head of the PSC, who explained that the PSC felt it was their job to check that the guidelines did not conflict with the code, but not to standardize them. Hanson, who has served on the PSC and as Chair of the PSC, agreed.

Cannon noted that the report from 2006 asked that the faculty engage in this discussion, and asked if the Senate want to take this to the faculty? As a side note, he mentioned that such a discussion would surely encourage attendance.

Cannon returned faculty to the survey on the evaluation form which had circulated during the meeting. No one asked for changes, but Cannon will send a copy to the Senate electronically. If any Senators would like to make suggestions, these must be sent by Tuesday, March 11th. O'Neil suggested that students be surveyed.

Meeting adjourned 5:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy K. Bristow