

Professional Standards Committee Minutes
March 30, 2006

Members present: Kris Bartanen, Bill Breitenbach, Karl Fields, Grace Kirchner, Sarah Moore, John Riegsecker, Don Share, Carolyn Weisz.

Chair Weisz called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm. The minutes of March 23, 2006 were approved as amended.

Dean Bartanen distributed copies of a document entitled "University of Puget Sound Code of Conduct," which Eric Orlin brought to the Senate at its March 24 meeting from the faculty-staff work group that has been considering language recommendations to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees. The document has been adopted by the Trustees, but some questions were raised by faculty about the intersection of the Code of Conduct and the Faculty Code. The working group, on which Bill Beardsley and Eric Orlin are serving, brought to the Senate their recommended revisions. The Senate suggested that the PSC have an opportunity to offer recommendations concerning possible future modifications and Bartanen volunteered to bring the document to the Committee. PSC members will review the recommended changes to the document and will raise any issues at its next meeting. Upon initial review, PSC members raised issues concerning the possible confusion resulting from the term "code" in both this document and the Faculty Code, the relationship of the section on confidentiality to the Faculty Code, and about who would have access to the new document.

Chair Weisz reported that the Faculty Senate expects to receive the PSC year end report a week before the meeting at which that report is to be presented. She will begin to draft that document.

For the remainder of the meeting the PSC had a lively discussion regarding the participation of first year faculty members in evaluations. Based on an informal survey of department chairs the PSC learned that the vast majority of departments require first-year faculty to participate in those evaluations (although they do so in different ways). Nevertheless, department chairs expressed concern about the requirements and sought further guidance about the exact nature of first-year faculty participation.

A wide-ranging discussion ensued, and generally fell into one of three areas. First, there was debate about the rationale for having first-year faculty participate in evaluations. On the one hand, such participation can serve an important socialization function, and new faculty members often have important expertise and perspective that more senior colleagues may lack. The evaluation process at Puget Sound presumes that not every evaluator will have information about every aspect of an evaluatee's

record. On the other hand, first-year faculty members may lack sufficient information, may be forced to write letters in their first weeks on campus (in tenure cases), may find the process awkward and intimidating, and may be rendered vulnerable in contentious evaluation cases and/or in polarized departments.

A second topic of deliberation concerned the precise expectations of first-year faculty members. For example, should first-year faculty members be required to participate in evaluations and write letters, as the Code appears to stipulate? Should first-year faculty members be allowed to observe the process without writing letters? If letters must be submitted by first-year faculty members, can those letters be very brief, and can they be considered to contain a recommendation if they conclude with an abstention?

A third theme in the discussions was how best to offer guidance and clarity to departments. The range of options include proposing an amendment to the faculty Code, issuing one of several possible formal Code interpretations, and/or inserting language into the Buff evaluation document published each year by the PSC. Committee members noted drawbacks to each approach.

The PSC will continue the deliberations at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Share