

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee  
October 26, 2005

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

PSC Chair Weisz called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

The minutes of October 19, 2005, were approved as revised.

The PSC determined that in order to inform the Faculty Senate in a timely manner of the PSC's work, revised and approved minutes will be sent to faculty.coms for posting and at the same time copied to Senate Chair Barry Anton and Senate PSC Liaison Nancy Bristow. A question was raised about whether this transmission of approved minutes to the Senate Chair would start the clock for written notification to the Senate as described in the Faculty Bylaws, Article 5, Section 5.a. ("Committee actions shall take effect unless modified, rejected or delayed within thirty (30) class days of written notification to the Senate."). It was decided that Weisz would contact Bristow about this matter.

Weisz reported that the discussion of the proposed Code Amendment of Chapter III, Sections 6 and 7 at the October 24, 2005 faculty meeting went smoothly. Breitenbach commended Weisz for her good work in presenting the matter to the faculty.

The PSC spent the remainder of the meeting discussing the proposed revision of the Biology Department evaluation guidelines. In the course of this discussion, PSC members raised the issue of "participation" in the evaluation process, particularly (but not exclusively) as it relates to first-year faculty.

The PSC discussed whether or not participation entails the making of a formal recommendation and whether or not an abstention constitutes a formal recommendation. PSC members noted that the Code is clear in stating that "[d]epartmental colleagues participating in the evaluation write letters" that are "substantive assessments" and that "[w]hen the evaluatee is eligible for a change in status, the letters shall forward the writers' independent recommendations." (Chapter III, Section 4, a, (1), (c)).

Members also noted, however, that there are practices in some departments of either excusing first-year faculty from any participation or allowing them to participate by observing classes, reading files, and even attending deliberations, but not voting. PSC members noted both merit and cause for concern in requiring the participation of first-year faculty in the evaluation process and expressed uncertainty about the validity of abstention. It was noted that with the option of open-file evaluations, these issues are potentially even more important. The PSC agreed to continue this discussion in a subsequent meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karl Fields