

Professional Standards Committee Minutes  
November 23, 2005

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 3:04 pm. The minutes of November 16, 2005 were approved as amended.

Weisz announced that proposed PSC amendments will be on the agenda of the next Senate meeting. Weisz and Breitenbach will attend.

The PSC determined that its meetings next semester will be Thursdays from 2-3 p.m, beginning on Thursday, January 19, 2005.

The PSC turned to a discussion of the role of first-year faculty members in department evaluations of colleagues. Committee members agreed that the survey of department chairs revealed no pressing problem concerning the role of first-year faculty members in evaluations. First-year faculty members in most departments participate in evaluations, but a few departments allow first-year faculty members to choose not to participate. Most departments allow first-year faculty members to write brief letters without making a recommendation.

Bartanen reported on her inquiry to the Faculty Advancement Committee about its view of letters authored by first-year faculty members. She reported that the Faculty Advancement Committee viewed letters by first-year faculty members discerningly in their proper context and that the FAC preferred to view the question of participation first-year faculty members in evaluations as a departmental matter.

Some concern was expressed that first-year faculty members, especially in the context of open files, might feel vulnerable if required to make a recommendation in their evaluation letters.

After much deliberation the PSC concluded that there is a contradiction between Chapter III, Section 4, b (requiring faculty members to write letters and make a recommendation) and the practice of most departments during evaluations (in which first-year faculty members are often permitted to write letters without making recommendations). Additionally, PSC members continued to discuss whether a written abstention could be considered to be a form of recommendation. The PSC asked Bartanen to canvass department chairs at the next chairs meeting to determine whether these matters are a concern.

The PSC then discussed an error in the Code that appears in Chapter V, Section 2, a. That section includes a reference to Chapter I, part B that should read "Chapter I, part C." The mistake was discovered in the context of the PSC's

discussion on the Code's ability to address plagiarism. The PSC instructed Breitenbach and Share to add this problem to a list of other errors in the existing Code to be addressed next semester. Breitenbach proposed, and the PSC agreed, to add a "housekeeping" clause to all future Code revisions that would allow technical errors (usually incorrect references or inconsistent terms) to be corrected by the PSC without an additional Code amendment. Breitenbach will draft the language and will offer it as an amendment to the Code revision currently under consideration by the faculty.

The PSC then prioritized the items remaining on its agenda. The next major issue to be addressed by the PSC will be to determine the exact meaning of "Tenure-line faculty." The question has arisen whether the term applies to faculty members who are no longer eligible for tenure.

The Committee will endeavor to make progress on the Business Leadership Program's evaluation guidelines at its next meeting.

Bartanen reported that the FAC requested that the PSC, when reviewing department evaluation guidelines, encourage departments to develop criteria for assessing the value of faculty work in the development of teaching technology.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Don Share