

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee September 23, 2010

Present: Bill Beardsley, Geoffrey Block, Alva Butcher, Julie Christoph, William Haltom (chair), Andy Rex, Mike Spivey, Lisa Wood

The meeting convened at 3:02 p.m. in Wyatt 226.

The minutes of September 16, 2010, were approved.

Absent formal charges from the Faculty Senate, the committee meeting entailed a discussion of the duty of the PSC “to recommend and improve continually the instruments and methods of Faculty evaluation and to facilitate their use in the University community” [Bylaws, Article V, Section 6.E.c.1.]. There was general agreement that if a department submits its evaluation guidelines for review by the PSC then the PSC is entitled but not obligated to review the entire set of guidelines, as opposed merely to reviewing specific changes since the last set of guidelines was approved. There was concern that not all departments are aware of this, and so the PSC agreed that when a department submits its guidelines for review the chair of PSC will notify that department’s chair that the PSC would be reviewing the entire document.

There was also concern expressed that the Faculty Code is ambiguous about the exact powers of the PSC with respect to these guidelines, especially how often department guidelines are reviewed by the PSC. The PSC agreed that department guidelines should be regularly reviewed by the PSC but was unsure about the appropriate way to implement such a change. It was agreed that changing the language in the “buff document” was probably not the best way. Haltom suggested that the committee could pass a statement to this effect as committee policy and submit it for approval by the Senate. Wood mentioned that the policy change could appear in the handbook for department chairs. There was general agreement that the dean’s office would need to be involved for any ongoing implementation of the policy to be effective. No resolutions were passed, although the committee did decide that the details of a policy change like this, including how often the guidelines should be reviewed, should continue to be discussed in the full PSC and not sent to subcommittee.

The following points were also made during the discussion:

- The PSC is merely evaluating departmental guidelines and not making judgments about how well departments are actually adhering to their guidelines. The Faculty Advancement Committee is responsible for the latter.
- Departmental guidelines are inconsistent across the university. Given the differences in academic disciplines, this should remain the case.
- While the PSC does consider content of departmental guidelines in its reviews, the PSC believes that its reviews are primarily concerned with clarity in the guidelines. The PSC recognizes that the individual departments are best able to determine appropriate evaluation standards in their respective fields.

The meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Z. Spivey