

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARD COMMITTEE**

**December 4th, 2013**

Present: William Barry, Geoffrey Block, Jennifer Hastings (chair), Tiffany MacBain, Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, Kurt Walls, and Kris Bartanen.

The meeting convened at 8:00am.

The approval of the minutes for the November 13, 2013 PSC meeting was unanimous.

### **Old Business**

#### 1. Interpretation for the use of Course Assistants (CA)

The first 30 minutes of the meeting were used to discuss this topic. Several edits suggested between the last meeting and this meeting were unanimously approved concerning procurement and expiration dates of department provided statements on the use of CAs. The committee then discussed the use of the words “must” vs. “should” in several of the passages of the new interpretation but took no further action on any changes in the text. The committee also discussed the following passage describing restrictions on the use of CAs with respect to grading: “All course assistant duties with respect to grading must be limited to objective evaluation.” The concern was raised that the wording of this passage was ambiguous with respect to what “objective evaluation” does or does not entail. The majority of the committee found the wording to be clear enough to fulfill its purpose. Committee members opined that any ambiguous departmental statements on the use of CAs with respect to grading could, if necessary, be sent back by the PSC to the department for additional clarification. The committee voted to approve 7:1.

#### 2. Involvement of LMIS in the deliberations of possible changes in the way evaluation forms are administered

An email with clarification by Senator Kotsis was sent to PSC chair Hastings from the LMIS chair clarifying that LMIS is not going to be involved in any initial discussions on whether or not evaluations should be administered electronically.

Thus, the PSC will take the lead in determining how to proceed on this matter.

### **New Business**

#### 1. Background check policy:

HR requested input from the PSC regarding changes in their background check policies. HR wants to implement “best practices”, which will initially include checking candidates against the national sex offender registry, and may eventually include a 7-year criminal history check, and education verification.

The background check policy would be used for new hires (faculty and staff) only, as well as re-hires, but not for promotion of current faculty.

It was clarified that relevant adverse information would not automatically disqualify the applicant. Instead any adverse information would be reviewed by HR representatives in coordination with the relevant VP or Dean and a decision made on a case-by-case basis. The PSC added a sentence to a draft letter from HR and unanimously approved the language in the letter as written.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 am.

Attachments:

1. PSC CA side by side original Clear NEW interpretation 120413.docx
2. Background check policy\_November 2013 draft\_120413.docx

Respectfully submitted by Andreas Madlung

Interpretation of Chapter I, Part C, Section 2, a. Guidelines for the Use of Course Assistants (Report to Faculty Senate 5 May 1986): **Current**

The responsibility for teaching and instruction at the University of Puget Sound resides with the faculty members. The university recognizes, however, that in special cases it is appropriate or necessary to utilize the services of students as course assistants. Course assistants do not replace full or part time faculty. Rather they extend and augment the ability of a faculty member to fulfill the objectives of a particular class. The use of course assistants in no way reduces, replaces, or eliminates the authority or responsibility a faculty member has for a course as specified in the Faculty Code.

Duties and Responsibilities of Course Assistants

Specific activities for course assistants will of necessity vary (from department to department and from course to course). Each department must develop a clear statement for each course concerning the use of course assistants. The statement should discuss, at least, the following: (1) faculty supervision, (2) the role of course assistants in the classroom or laboratory, (3) the specific tasks assigned to course assistants, (4) the degree and type of interaction between the course assistants and students, (5) the role of course assistants in grading and evaluating student work, (6) the expected number of hours of work, and (7) the method of evaluating performance. This statement should be made available to all prospective course assistants and reviewed specifically with all course assistants at the beginning of their employment.

Supervision and Responsibility of Course Assistants

Each course assistant must be under the direct guidance and supervision of a faculty member. Unless there are unusual circumstances, the supervising faculty member should be the person responsible for the course in which the course assistant is employed. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to see that the course assistant successfully fulfills the requirements of the job. The supervisor will meet in a timely fashion with the course assistant to develop

**Interpretation of Chapter I, Part C, Section 2, a. Guidelines for the Use of Course Assistants (Report to Faculty Senate December 4, 2013): Current**

Definition of Course Assistants

Course Assistants are either paid employees of the university or students receiving compensation in a different form for their assistance in coursework.

Responsibilities

The responsibility for teaching and instruction at the University of Puget Sound resides with the faculty members. The university recognizes, however, that in special cases it is appropriate or necessary to utilize the services of students as course assistants. Course assistants do not replace full or part time faculty. Rather they extend and augment the ability of a faculty member to fulfill the objectives of a particular class. The use of course assistants in no way reduces, replaces, or eliminates the authority or responsibility a faculty member has for a course as specified in the Faculty Code.

Requirements for Departmental Guidelines for Course Assistants

Specific activities for course assistants will of necessity vary (from department to department and from course to course). Each department must develop a clear statement for each course concerning the use of course assistants. The statement should discuss, at least, the following: (1) faculty supervision, (2) the role of course assistants in the classroom or laboratory, (3) the specific tasks assigned to course assistants, (4) the degree and type of interaction between the course assistants and students, (5) the role of course assistants in grading and evaluating student work, (6) the expected number of hours of work, and (7) the method of evaluating performance of the CA; (8) how confidentiality of sensitive material is ensured (in some cases course assistants will have access to confidential information e.g., grades, performance records, or evaluations about the students enrolled in the class. The department and the supervisor must make every effort to restrict course assistants' access to such information to a minimum. Course assistants must be made aware of the sensitive nature of such information and should be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Abuse of this privilege should be

appropriate material for the course and to assess the course assistant's performance.

The supervisor, or faculty member responsible for the course, should inform the students enrolled in the course about the role and duties of each course assistant. Students should also be informed that they have the right to appeal decisions made by any course assistant to the faculty member or supervisor.

#### Confidentiality of Sensitive Material

In some cases course assistants will have access to confidential information (e.g., grades, performance records, or evaluations) about the students enrolled in the class. It is normally inadvisable for one student to obtain confidential information about another student. Thus, the department and the supervisor must make every effort to restrict course assistants' access to such information to a minimum. Course assistants must be made aware of the sensitive nature of this information and directed to treat it in the strictest of confidence. Abuse of this privilege should be grounds for dismissal of a course assistant from employment.

#### Selection of Course Assistants

Each department must develop a procedure for selecting course assistants which is consistent with both the needs of the department and with the prevailing regulations and rules applicable to equal employment. Selection criteria should correspond to the departmental statements about the duties and responsibilities of the course assistant position. The primary concern of the department in selecting course assistants must be the ability of individuals to perform satisfactorily the expected functions of a course assistant. To the extent possible, departments should select students who qualify for university matching funds under existing work-study programs. Applications for

grounds for dismissal of a course assistant from employment.); and (9) the process of selection of course assistants (Each department must develop a procedure for selecting course assistants which is consistent with both the needs of the department and with the prevailing regulations and rules applicable to equal employment. Selection criteria should correspond to the departmental statements about the duties and responsibilities of the course assistant position. The primary concern of the department in selecting course assistants must be the ability of individuals to perform satisfactorily the expected functions of a course assistant. To the extent possible, departments should select students who qualify for university matching funds under existing work-study programs. Applications for positions should be solicited from all qualified students. Notification to both selected individuals and unsuccessful applicants should be in writing. The department should ensure that each selection is based on rational criteria and procedures so that they are not perceived as arbitrary or capricious. The department should be willing to discuss its decisions with unsuccessful applicants. After the selection process is completed the department is responsible for working with the university's Office of Student Employment to execute the appropriate documents as applicable).

This statement should be made available to all prospective course assistants and reviewed specifically with all course assistants at the beginning of their employment.

#### Supervision and Responsibility of Course Assistants

Each course assistant must be under the direct guidance and supervision of a faculty member. All course assistant duties with respect to grading must be limited to objective evaluation. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to see that the course assistant successfully fulfills the requirements of the job. The supervisor will meet in a timely fashion with the course assistant to develop appropriate material for the course and to assess the course assistant's performance.

The supervisor, or faculty member responsible for the course, should inform the students enrolled in the course about the role and duties of each course assistant. Students should also be informed that they have the right to appeal decisions made by any course assistant to the faculty member or supervisor.

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Role of Professional Standards Committee

Since course assistants perform some of the activities and have some of the responsibilities of faculty members, it is in the interest of the university to monitor their use. Thus, each department employing course assistants should submit to the Professional Standards Committee a document which explains the duties, responsibilities, and supervision of course assistants. The committee will review this document and determine whether it is appropriate. When the department obtains committee approval it may then employ course assistants in accordance with these procedures and the departmental document.

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## Background Check Policy

Draft November 2013

University of Puget Sound is committed to providing a safe and secure environment conducive to academic and professional excellence. To do so, it is the college's practice to hire well-qualified candidates for employment whose past behavior does not suggest a risk of future harm to the campus community.

Employment offers for regular full-time, part-time or temporary faculty and staff positions, whether to individuals new to university employment, individuals re-employed by the university, or individuals transferred to new positions, will be contingent upon the results of appropriate background checks. The nature of the position and the information disclosed during the application/interview process will determine the scope of the background checks applicable to the job. For faculty positions appropriate background checks will be determined by HR in consultation with PSC.

Relevant adverse information discovered through the background check process will be reviewed by a Human Resources representative and the applicable Vice President/Dean. Adverse information discovered in the background check will not automatically disqualify an individual from employment. Decisions concerning employment will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Information gained from any background checks process will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.