

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 21, 2015; 8:00 am, Wyatt 226

Present: Kris Bartanen, Geoffrey Block, Douglas Cannon, Betsy Kirkpatrick, Tiffany Aldrich MacBain (Chair), Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, Amy Spivey, as well as visitors Stacey Weiss, Kena Fox-Dobbs, and Ariela Tubert (members of the Family Leave working group)

The meeting convened at 8:02 a.m. and the minutes of April 14 were approved with very minor corrections.

Weiss reported to the committee on the newly drafted Medical and Family Leave Policies. She first pointed out key changes that have previously been supported by a straw poll of the faculty:

- Automatic 1-year delay of tenure evaluations if the leave is taken. Faculty members taking a leave can choose to opt out of this delay.
- Automatic release from service and advising commitments during a semester in which a leave occurs. Faculty members taking a leave can choose to opt out of each of these releases separately.
- For medical and family situations that occur during the summer or other breaks from scheduled class days, leaves will be granted for the following semester.
- Eligibility for leaves during the first year of employment for tenure-line appointed faculty, rather than requiring that one year of employment be completed before the faculty member is eligible.

Weiss noted that their working group had separated into two documents the Medical and Family Leave Policies and the Disability Policies. The working group made no substantive changes in the Disabilities Policies.

After briefly outlining the Medical and Family Leave Policies document, the floor was opened for questions from the committee.

Bartanen clarified that, since the university offers paid personal medical leave, to be in compliance with state law, the university must also offer paid family leave.

A question was raised regarding the lengths of the three types of leaves that are described on page 3 of the draft document. The response from the working group was that the current policy on unpaid parental leave is inconsistent; it says that up to 12 weeks are allowed, but in an example it provides for up to one semester off (which is equivalent to 18 weeks under the 1 unit = 6 weeks equivalency). In any case, that duration would not change under the new policy. Bartanen noted that other changes are expansions to current benefits that must be approved by the Board of Trustees. One of these is the paid leave during the following semester for medical or family events that occurred during summer or other breaks. Another of these is the automatic 1-year delay of tenure evaluation following a medical or family leave.

The committee noted that the draft policy states an automatic delay of tenure evaluations only, and the current policy has an automatic delay of all evaluations. The consensus of deliberation was that leaves should trigger an automatic 1-year delay in all evaluations, rather than a delay “proportionate” to the length of the leave, which is the current code interpretation (but which has been implemented only in increments of a semester or a year).

A question arose as to why opting out of service and advising release requires only a form whereas opting out of the evaluation delay requires a written notification to the dean. Bartanen explained that opting out of the evaluation delay is a more serious decision and an evaluatee may not realize at the time of the leave whether he or she wishes to opt out of the evaluation delay. Therefore, a written request to opt out seems prudent, and the committee agreed that such a written request to opt out of the delay could be submitted up to one semester prior to the year when the evaluation is scheduled.

The concern was expressed that it is already difficult to find enough faculty for committees; will increased leaves make it even more difficult to staff the standing committees? However, it was noted that the proposal to reduce committee size will help to alleviate this problem.

Impacts on colleagues’ advising loads was also mentioned as a consideration, but the committee agreed that advisees can temporarily be advised by Academic Advising or the department chair during the term of the leave.

Bartanen reminded the committee that Short-Term Disability coverage is also available as an optional benefit that can be elected during benefits open enrollment, which could provide additional coverage to those taking paid or unpaid personal medical leaves.

The draft Medical and Family Leave Policy was endorsed (M/S/P) unanimously by the PSC, including a revision that automatic delay of any evaluation, not only the tenure evaluation, would accompany a leave.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Kirkpatrick