

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee

March 1, 2016

Present: Geoffrey Block, Tiffany MacBain, Garrett Milam, Mark Reinitz (chair), Kurt Walls, Matt Warning

The meeting commenced at 2:01 p.m.

The committee approved the minutes of February 16, 2016.

Chair Reinitz led a discussion of upcoming business, including two final Code interpretations that the PSC must revise to complete a charge issued last year (see Faculty Code, page 39, lines 26-39 and page 48, lines 44-52 [continuing to lines 1-18 on page 49]). Reinitz indicated that, per a prior agreement, he and Jennifer Neighbors would each revise one interpretation. He will distribute the interpretations and rationales via email to PSC members in advance of the next meeting. He also said that the Faculty Senate would like the PSC to act (in some way) on the charge related to bias in student evaluations of faculty.

The committee discussed an email request issued by Associate Dean Martin Jackson for a member of the PSC to join others in reviewing a proposed policy to change the terms of certain visiting faculty positions. Two committee members expressed an interest in assisting Jackson, one of whom declared that they would contact him to learn the terms of the agreement—whether the PSC member is to act as representative of the committee or to serve in a general advisory capacity. Following this decision, the committee identified some considerations raised by the proposal, all of which echoed the considerations articulated in Jackson's email.

The conversation turned to the unresolved question of how to interpret the “distinguished service” phrase in the Faculty Code, chapter 3, page 11, lines 25-27. One committee member registered the opinion that this question is less important than the issue of disparity and inequity in departments' interpretation of “professional growth” and, consequently, in how departments promote faculty to full professor. Other committee members recalled that the survey sent earlier this year indicated a division in the way that departments interpret “distinguished service,” and they reiterated their reluctance to interpret this segment of the Code, for to do so would necessarily impose a “culture change” upon half of the departments on campus. The committee revisited the idea of presenting its findings to the Full Faculty for review and conversation but determined first to locate and read the PSC minutes from the period in which the line about “distinguished service” was written. The hope is to gain some insight into the intention of the original

authors of the line. While such information will not necessarily determine or forego an interpretation, it would be useful to consider.

Next the committee entertained the question of whether or not the Faculty Evaluation Procedures and Criteria ("Buff Document") should provide information to clarify whether or not a faculty evaluation must be confined to the contents of the evaluation file. Members briefly reviewed the points of discussion from the last few meetings and agreed that there are checks and balances in place in the Code that provide for reporting and investigating practices of review alleged to be improper. Even so, clarification might be warranted to avoid such occurrences as an evaluatees' misrepresentation of their own scholarship and fishing expeditions by reviewers looking to introduce something negative into a review. Committee members considered the question of whether or not the practice can and should be codified as a uniform standard. Is it best left to individual departments? Ultimately, the committee decided 1) to continue (for now) to allow individual departments to determine standard practice, and 2) to inform the Faculty Senate that there is a potential problem with the articulation of evaluation procedures in the Faculty Code.

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany MacBain