

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee  
April 14, 2016

Present: Mark Reinitz (Chair), Jennifer Neighbors, Matt Warning, Geoffrey Block, Kurt Walls, Tiffany MacBain, Kris Bartanen, and Garrett Milam

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m.

The chair informed the committee that our year-end report will be due to the Faculty Senate Chair on April 22. The chair will draft that report and distribute it to the committee early in the week of April 18-22. Our April 22 meeting will focus on discussion of that report and any necessary revisions to it.

M/S/P minutes from the March 29 meeting, pending approval from that meeting's visitor, Julie Nelson Christoph.

The chair raised an item of new business: the School of Physical Therapy (PT) contacted the PSC to ask if they could change their evaluation procedures to make the participation of non-departmental faculty members on evaluation committees optional. The usual procedure in the Schools of OT and PT has been for one Occupational Therapy (OT) faculty member to serve on PT evaluation committees and for one PT faculty member to serve on OT evaluation committees. The PSC will caution PT that the PSC will have concerns if any new procedures create inconsistencies from one evaluation to the next, but will ask PT to revise their school's review guidelines and send them to the PSC for review.

The committee next discussed when our proposed changes to the Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Sexual Misconduct should be presented to the Board of Trustees, and what the implications are for forwarding our new interpretations of the Faculty Code, the ones that bring the Faculty Code into compliance with recent changes to Title IX legislation, to the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. The Gender and Sexual Violence Committee is proposing revisions to the Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment and Sexual Misconduct and has accepted the language on prohibited sexual relationships as proposed by the PSC and discussed with the Faculty Senate. Since that committee's work is to be completed this summer, the PSC decided that it would have all of the proposed Faculty Code interpretations finalized and ready to forward to the October 2016 Board meeting along with the Campus Policy revisions.

The committee engaged in final discussion of the wording of the proposed policy prohibiting sexual and/or romantic relationships between a faculty member and a student, and whether "romantic" or "intimate" was the best term to use in combination with "sexual." The university's legal counsel had reported to Dean Bartanen that the term "romantic" was used in most such policies, and that though there were no obvious problems with the word "intimate" we should keep in mind that it covers a wider swath of behavior. While a small number of committee members expressed lingering discomfort with the term "romantic" and its connotations, it was agreed that "romantic" was the better choice, since the term "intimate" might problematize close intellectual relationships that are not inappropriate.

The committee also agreed to modify wording of the policy so that it reads “a faculty member and a student,” in accordance with a suggestion from the committee’s Faculty Senate liaison.

The committee next discussed the issue of “distinguished service” and its meaning. Dean Bartanen reported that the phrase first appeared in the Faculty Code in 1982. Faculty minutes from that period show possible change from a negative standard (“not merely satisfactory”) to a positive statement (“distinguished service”). Neither Board nor Faculty minutes that were able to be located from that period contain documentation of the intended meaning of the phrase “distinguished service.” The Chair will include this information, as well as the results of the survey conducted in the fall, in the committee’s year-end report and note that the PSC feels this issue is one that should be handled by the larger faculty, either the Faculty Senate or at a meeting of the full faculty, because there are currently so many different interpretations of the phrase “distinguished service.”

The committee next discussed the issue of gender bias in course evaluations. Among the committee’s options were adding language to the Faculty Evaluation Procedures and Criteria document to caution faculty about such bias, or to see what the informal working group on this issue concludes or proposes before taking formal action. The committee agreed to do the latter.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Neighbors