

Report of the Professional Standards Committee for 1996-97
April 29, 1997

Committee Members:

William Breitenbach (chairman), Geoffrey Block, Barry Goldstein (spring semester), Catherine Hale, Kathy Ann Miller (spring semester), John Riegsecker (fall semester), James Sorensen, Theodore Taranovski, Lisa F. Wood (fall semester), David B. Potts (ex officio, fall semester), Terry A. Cooney (ex officio, spring semester)

What We Did:

- The PSC brought to the faculty for approval a series of amendments to the Faculty Bylaws and Faculty Code that replaced the terms “career faculty” and “non-career faculty” with the terms “tenure-line faculty” and “non-tenure-line faculty.”
- The PSC responded to a request for guidance from the Faculty Advancement Committee (FAC) by reaffirming the FAC’s established procedural interpretation of Chapter III, Sections 4(i), 5(a), 5(b), and 5(c), of the Faculty Code.
- The PSC responded to requests from individual faculty members and the FAC for an interpretation of Code provisions regarding class visitation in the evaluation process. The PSC issued a memorandum to department chairs, deans of schools, and program directors clarifying how a “reasonable number of class visits” is to be determined and documented.
- The PSC responded to an individual faculty member’s request for an interpretation of Code provisions having to do with five-year evaluations of full professors. The question at issue was whether the Code provides appeals procedures for full professors who are denied salary-scale advancement. After extended discussions, the PSC issued an interpretation of Chapter III, Section 6(a), of the Code, an interpretation that was deemed to be “of significant merit” and that accordingly was brought in written form to the Faculty Senate.
- At the request of the Faculty Senate and two individual faculty members, the PSC discussed conflicts of interests. The Committee observed that conflicts of interest involving spouses, domestic partners, and family members are already addressed by existing Code interpretations. The Committee discussed the potential for conflicts of interest involving members of the same department participating in mutual evaluations, especially tenure evaluations. The PSC concluded that existing evaluation procedures and Code provisions, when properly followed, provide adequate safeguards and that mandatory recusal is not necessary. Finally, the PSC considered the potential for conflicts of interest in its own deliberations and determinations. The Committee formulated a policy for dealing with conflicts of interests in matters that come before it, and it brought that policy to the Faculty Senate as a proposed amendment to the Faculty Bylaws.
- The chairs of the PSC and the Faculty Senate organized a hearing board for the appeal of a tenure case.

- At the request of an individual faculty member, the PSC issued an interpretation of Chapter VI, Section 1(b), of the Code. The Committee concluded that this section of the Code bars appellants in the evaluation process from filing a grievance against a hearing board for actions that the hearing board performs pursuant to its duties in matters of evaluation.

What We Didn't Do:

- The PSC did not continue its work (unfinished in 1995-96) on the review of standards and procedures for evaluation. The PSC did not want to duplicate the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Code Revision, so it left this formidable task to that group. However the PSC did hold a joint meeting with the Ad Hoc Committee in order to identify places in the Code that, in the judgment of PSC members, need revision or clarification.
- I should note here that it is extremely difficult for the PSC to engage in sustained work on intricate policy matters like the aforementioned review because the Committee is frequently interrupted by urgent and time-consuming requests for Code interpretations.

What We Still Need To Do:

- The PSC began but did not finish a revision of the statement entitled "University Evaluation Criteria." Next year's PSC should be charged with completing this revision.
- The PSC talked about undertaking an editorial revision and possible consolidation of its two summer memoranda on faculty evaluations. These memoranda are sent every summer to "Department Chairs/School Directors/Deans" and to "All Career Faculty." Revising these documents should be another agenda item for next year's PSC.
- Given recent changes in the Code (such as the removal of references to "personal and professional characteristics" as a criterion for evaluation), changes in guidelines for evaluations (such as the PSC's recent memorandum on class visits), and changes in various departments' procedures and expectations, it may be time for the PSC to take another look at departmental statements of "procedures, criteria, and standards for evaluation." Working with departments to insure that these statements accurately reflect current practice and policy, at both the departmental and university levels, should be a task assigned the PSC in 1997-98.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman