

Professional Standards Committee
1995-1996
Final Report
Prepared by: Lisa F. Wood, May 1, 1996

Committee Membership: Dean Potts (ex-officio), Ken Rousslang, Lisa Wood (chair), Barry Goldstein, Geoffrey Block, Ted Taranovski, John Riegsecker and Bill Beardsley.

Progress Report on Charges:

1. Continue examination of departmental standards and criteria and their relationship to the Code and to Committee documents.

After a careful review of current practices, the committee completed an initial draft of a document which will serve to standardize departmental, school and program evaluation procedures. This document will undergo further revision during the upcoming year to clarify procedures and present them in a logical and easily accessible format. Upon completion of the initial document, the committee plans to seek feedback from department chairs and members of the Faculty Advancement Committee. Final implementation will be planned subsequent to the integration of feedback. (The committee offers special thanks to Ted Taranovski for the development of this document and to Carrie Washburn for her help with our initial survey.)

The committee also prepared a report on evaluation standards across the university, noting common themes, unusual practices and key distinctions. A copy of this document is available upon request as we don't anticipate further revisions at this point. (The committee appreciates the work of Geoff Block in the preparation of this report.)

2. Continue study of the general issue of the role and responsibilities of instructors.

The committee voted to propose revisions in the upcoming year that would alter the language related to career and non-career faculty. We will propose that these terms be replaced by the words tenure-line and non-tenure-line respectively. We have outlined the areas of the code and by-laws which would require such changes. Our goal is to eliminate language which implies a lesser commitment on the part of instructors to their academic careers. We expect to bring this proposal to the whole faculty at the beginning of next year. Our report will be made available upon request. (Special thanks go to John Riegsecker for his careful preparation of this document.)

3. Participate in any general review of University retirement policy by drafting appropriate Code changes.

Due to the appointment of a special committee for the review of retirement policies, the committee opted to action on this charge.

4. Review as needed departmental statements of Standards and Criteria for Evaluation.

The committee is delaying any further review of departmental documents until the procedural model (described above) has been reviewed and implemented. One option is to utilize this standardized protocol as the guide for future reviews of departmental statements. Similarly, our discussion of University and Departmental standards, currently on hold until next fall, will influence future reviews.

5. Develop policy regarding conflicts of interest (suggested by faculty member).

The committee discussed issues of conflict as we reviewed the appeals and grievance procedures this year. Consistent with the report offered by Terry Mace, the committee feels that code revisions regarding the dual-roles of administrators and faculty are in order. In particular, the committee has noted a greater need for revision in the above procedures to clarify roles, tasks and guidelines for the handling of potential conflicts of interest. (Thanks go to Barry Goldstein for the preparation of a working document.)

Appeals:

Two tenure appeals were filed this year. As per code specifications, the chair of this committee co-directed the selection of hearing boards and the implementation of appropriate appeals board procedures. In a number of discussions, members of the Professional Standards Committee noted a lack of specificity and balance in the procedures for tenure appeals. In particular, concerns were expressed regarding the disclosure of hearing board findings to appellants. Members expressed a desire to see relevant sections of the Code carefully evaluated next year.

(The committee appreciates the collaboration of Grace Kirchner in our response to appeals requests. Ken Rousslang is also to be commended for his wise counsel and professional demeanor as we proceeded.)

Grievances:

Dean Potts requested that the PSC determine the validity of two applications for grievance hearings. The committee read through both grievance petitions and determined that neither request could be treated as a grievance due to the overlap of expressed concerns with material covered in related appeals. This determination was based on a careful reading of the Faculty Code. (The committee recognizes and appreciates the Dean's proactive consultation in this matter).

Requests for Interpretation or Feedback regarding the Code:

The committee received one request for an interpretation which was declined. We also received one request for clarification of code specifications on faculty contracts subsequent to a tenure denial. The committee responded with a letter of information (The committee appreciates Bill Beardsley's efforts in drafting our response.)

Suggestions for Upcoming Charges:

We suggest that the committee continue its work on the review of standards and procedures for evaluation as outlined above. We would like to take up the issues raised in the ad hoc senate committee report as part of our upcoming charges, with a particular emphasis on a review of the grievance and appeal processes. This would allow for a more focused examination of questions related to conflict of interest.

It has been an honor and pleasure to work with this committee. If senators have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

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