

Faculty Handbook Revisions Committee July 11, 2012

Members Present: Cynthia Waskowiak, Monica Scheibmeir, Carol Vogel, Jalen Lowry, David Sollars, Alan Bearman, Bill Roach, Steve Angel, Randy Pembrook

Discussion

Randy Pembrook, Promotion and Tenure Sub-Committee Chair, presented a report:

Randy reviewed each department's promotion and tenure procedure, then read the University procedure and compiled a list of issues and questions that arose. (See his handout.) He tried to determine where differences exist between departments and whether those differences are significant. Most questions arose from the varying probationary periods for tenure.

The committee had the following comments regarding tenure:

- The most common probationary period across higher ed institutions is 6 years (trial run in the 3rd year), with the 7th being a terminal year. This gives the individual and the department time to find another job and replacement, respectively.
- Some faculty have been allowed to re-petition in year 7 if they were denied in year 6; this is not advisable by Lisa.
- Departments like to give some faculty the option to try for tenure earlier than the 6th year. It's a reward for their work and it allows us to lock them into WU. We need to determine when faculty must go up for review, and when they're allowed to go up for review.
- The By-laws state the tenure period "shall not exceed a 7 year probationary period." Lisa advised that we can have a 6 year probationary period in the handbook as long as we follow it.
- Lisa advised that the handbook should include specific written parameters that are followed consistently if units are given flexibility. She's uncomfortable with our current process and likes a 6 year probation period with no change in year 7. It needs to be clear that year 7 is a terminal year. Others agreed that it's good to be clear that faculty have 6 years, not 7.
- Some departments would like to have the normal process with some discretion for post-tenure review. All agreed that everyone should be reviewed in year 6, with a possible second review in year 7 for unusual circumstances.
- We need a clearer mechanism to stop the tenure clock, there are not good definite reasons for stopping now. Some departments wondered if they should have the discretion to stop it or if there needs to be explicit events to stop it.
- Lisa advised that a decision to stop the clock needs to be the faculty's decision, not each department. They can be encouraged and advised, but they need to make the decision. There should be a University policy to avoid inconsistency between departments.

Randy next wondered if each department/unit had discussed guidelines for what's accepted as "credit" toward the required years of experience for tenure.

- Carol thought we should set a University-wide minimum number of years for faculty to be at WU for tenure. The credit decision shouldn't be made at hire, but can be determined when a faculty member goes up and claims credit. The SOL does hire with tenure.
- Some committee members liked keeping this tailored to the individual with the Dean assuring eligibility to the P&T committee.
- The committee agreed there should be a minimum threshold with exceptions. Most wanted to avoid a rushed tenure for time to determine the faculty's teaching style and fit with WU. A minimum is good for consistency.

Randy briefly went through the rest of his handout. The required education level is pretty clear. The VPAA's office has a good start on a list by department for what is considered a terminal degree. Some departments, like SOB, are driven by an accrediting body's requirements for degrees.

There was lots of agreement about promotion to professor, but differences for promotion to Associate professor. Some departments do promotion at the same time as tenure while others do it at different times. The committee found it weird that some faculty get tenure but not promotion and think they should be linked.

Randy also drafted a summary of the decisions reached by the committee. It is included below; it was also emailed to the committee 7/13/12.

Decisions:

- Randy drafted a summary that will be reviewed again by the full committee, then possibly reviewed by faculty senate.
- We should have a 6 year probationary period, year 7 being a terminal year with limited, explicit exceptions for review in year 7. Those limited exceptions need to be discussed.
- We will determine a minimum required years of teaching and a minimum required years of teaching at WU before tenure is granted.
- A list of "clock stopping" circumstances and guidelines are needed.
- Tenure review and promotion to Associate Professor should be linked.

Next Meeting: July 25, Vogel Room

Randy's Summary:

Move to a model and supporting language indicating Washburn has a MAXIMUM 6-year probationary period requiring tenure review no later than year 6. Under extraordinary circumstances a tenure-track applicant who is denied tenure during the Year-6 review, could be reviewed again during the terminal contract year, but for the large majority, the Year-6 decision would stand. How to define "extraordinary circumstances" would need to be addressed. We would eliminate handbook references to a 7-year probationary period.

Rationale: The 6-year model is the standard in higher education; the 7-year model delays the unit's ultimate decision until March of the seventh year for those seeking a second review of materials resulting in potential disruptions for unit continuity because of delayed searches for replacements.

2. Move to a model and supporting language indicating Washburn has across the board minimum thresholds for (a) years of full-time teaching experience required for tenure and (b) years of full-time teaching experience AT WASHBURN before tenure is granted. Under extraordinary circumstances a tenure-track applicant who is seeking tenure could be reviewed early. In many cases this flexibility could be built into the original hiring contract. "Extraordinary circumstances" would need to be addressed if the decision for early review is to be made in the years AFTER the initial contract has been completed. Or, words such as "generally" or "in most cases" could be used in the policy to create unit flexibility. Units could raise the DEPARTMENT expectation above the MINIMUM Washburn probationary period. In general, once the minimum thresholds are met, candidates could apply for tenure at any point between the MINIMUM and MAXIMUM thresholds.

Rationale: A policy needs to be determined which balances flexibility and adequate time to display teaching, research/artistic activity and service capabilities.

3. We need to generate wording on the policy and procedures for "stopping the clock" for those individuals on tenure track lines who confront major life changing events (e.g., health issues personally or for loved ones, professional opportunities [e.g., elected for a two-year term to lead a national organization]) so that these steps are clear to faculty members and to administrators and can be applied appropriately and consistently. This wording also could address whether the "clock" and the original timeline can be "re-negotiated" under more normal circumstances (e.g., research agenda does not accelerate at the rate envisioned after a short timeline was negotiated in the original contract).

Rationale: In certain instances, life events come to bear during the time period preceding tenure review. Washburn's rules need to be flexible enough and clear enough to deal with these circumstances.

4. Combine the Tenure review process and the consideration of promotion to Associate Professor.

Rationale: Current language regarding the period for promotion to Associate Professor seems confusing with minimum of 7 years (4 at WU) and 6 years (3

at @U) being the most common. The current concept that a candidate is strong enough to warrant a lifetime commitment (tenure) but not strong enough for a promotion (Assistant to Associate) seems counter intuitive. Again, citing common practice in higher education, it would seem prudent and efficient to combine the process of tenure review and promotion to Associate Professor to avoid a second review within 1-2 years of the tenure decision.

5. Broaden/clarify the "equivalent degree or experience" argument for those not holding a doctoral credential so that expectations are transparent.

Rationale: The terminal degree definitions by discipline are used in calculating statistics for external reports. It would be fairly simple to include this information in an appendix to the Washburn P&T process to avoid any confusion.