

Faculty Affairs Committee
Washburn University
Minutes
October 29, 2012

Present:

Royce Kitts
Bill Roach

Keith Mazachek
David Rubenstein

Diane McMillen
Sarah Ubel, Chair

Marguerite Perret
Roy Wohl

Call to Order: 1:00 pm - Crane Room (Union)

Old Business:

- Minutes approved October 22, 2012 at the Faculty Senate meeting

New Business:

- Faculty Handbook: Discussion and Recommendations regarding Tenure and Promotions Issues 5 – 9 (summarized below) took place

Announcements:

- Next meeting will be determined when new business arises

Adjournment: 5:16

**Faculty Handbook Revision Issues
Promotion and Tenure
Discussed by Faculty Affairs on 10-29-12**

Present:

Royce Kitts
Bill Roach

Keith Mazachek
David Rubenstein

Diane McMillen
Sarah Ubel, Chair

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Issues Identified by
Faculty Handbook Revision Committee
Promotion and Tenure

Committee Discussion

5. Issue: Review of Files by Faculty holding identical rank (e.g., Assoc. Professor reviewing applications of an Assoc. Professor for promotion to Professor)

Potential Direction for Discussion by Faculty Groups:

- A. Designate that an assistant professor should never vote on a file of a faculty member applying for associate or full professor.
- B. Likewise, an associate professor should not vote on an application for full professor.
- C. In cases where a potential committee member is in such a position, either he/she should recuse himself/herself or the unit's committee membership policies should be written in such a way so as to create substitute membership, thus avoiding the problem.

There were questions regarding the rationale for excluding Associate Professors from reviewing the promotion materials for those petitioning for Professor.

- Challenges
 - Given the small size of many departments in campus, this would significantly minimize or eliminate departmental participation on a petitioner's committee.
 - Non-departmental committee members may find it difficult to interpret the petitioner's activities described in the petition because they lack familiarity with standards and expectations of the discipline. This difficulty may be exacerbated if there are no members of the department on the committee.
 - This may allow a small group or single member of a department to serve as the entire departmental voice on the committee regarding who is promoted to Professor.
- Benefits
 - It may potentially eliminate conflicts regarding membership of the department committee for those petitioning for Professor since all members would be of the same level.
- A discrepancy between the rank of the petition and the rank of a reviewer was also identified to be possible in the following circumstances:
 - It is possible that the Department Chair who reviews and makes a recommendation regarding the petition may be at a lower rank than the petitioner. This should not preclude the Department Chair from reviewing and making a recommendation regarding the petition.

- It is possible that the individual committee members of university committees (ex: College Committee on Promotion and Tenure) who reviews and makes a collective recommendation regarding the petition may be at a lower rank than the petitioner. This should not preclude a committee member from reviewing and contributing toward the collective recommendation regarding the petition.

The Faculty Affairs Committee requests language regarding this issue from the Faculty Handbook Review Committee.

- Language should be clear regarding:
 - Individuals eligible for service on a tenure and promotion (to Associate Professor) committee must be tenured faculty.
 - Individuals eligible for service on a promotion (to Professor) committee must be an Associate Professor or Professor.
 - Individuals serving as Department Chair and on University Committees related to promotion and tenure must be tenured faculty and may review petitions for a faculty rank higher than the committee person or chair currently holds.

6. Issue: Language pertaining to the probationary period

Potential Direction for Discussion by Faculty Groups:

- A. Move to a model and supporting language indicating Washburn has a MAXIMUM 6-year probationary period requiring tenure review no later than year 6.
- B. 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.
- C. How to define “extraordinary circumstances” would need to be addressed.
- D. We would eliminate handbook references to a 7-year probationary period.

The Faculty Affairs Committee requests language regarding this issue from the Faculty Handbook Review Committee.

- Language should be clear regarding:
 - There is a six year probationary period.
 - If the petition for promotion for promotion and tenure is unsuccessful then the seventh year will be a terminal contract with no opportunity for reapplication for promotion and tenure.
 - There should be no extraordinary circumstances identified which would allow a reapplication for promotion and tenure in the seventh year.
 - The committee discussed that “extraordinary circumstances” would be those which enabled the stoppage of the tenure clock which would still allow for a six year probationary period excluding the “clock stopped” year(s). This topic is discussed in Issue 7.
 - All references to a seven year probationary period will be eliminated.

7. Issue: Communication regarding potentially stopping the tenure clock in unusual circumstances

Potential Direction for Discussion by Faculty Groups:

- A. Generate wording in the policy and procedures for “stopping the clock” for those individuals on tenure track lines who confront major life changing events (e.g., health or family issues, 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.
- B. 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).

The Faculty Affairs Committee requests language regarding this issue from the Faculty Handbook Review Committee.

- It was a consensus that flexibility should be maintained regarding the interpretation of “extraordinary circumstances” that would precipitate stopping a tenure clock. However, it was also concluded that a brief list of appropriate examples of “extraordinary circumstances” should be articulated to give guidance to faculty. Some examples discussed were:
 - birth or adoption of a child
 - significant health issue or death
 - significant professional opportunity

The following questions arose regarding this issue:

- What is the time frame within which an “extraordinary circumstance” must be claimed?
 - EX: It may be reasonable that the claiming of an “extraordinary circumstance” resulting from the birth of a child should be required to occur within a particular time frame. It may be reasonable that the claiming of an “extraordinary circumstance” resulting from the death of a child should not be required to occur within a particular time frame.
- How much time is stopped?
 - Should this be a full academic year, semester or some other length of time?
- How many times can you stop the tenure clock during the six year probationary period?
- Should there be a maximum length of time that the tenure clock can be stopped during the probationary period?
- The process through which the “extraordinary circumstance” would be applied for should be articulated and included in the Faculty Handbook. We knew of no process for making this request.
 - It was presumed that the current “unofficial” process was for the non-tenured faculty member to first communicate his or her rationale for “stopping the tenure clock” with the Department Chair. A dilemma may arise at this point, if the Department Chair does not agree with the rationale the non-tenured faculty member presented. That junior faculty member may be faced with circumventing the Chair to contact the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Department Chair should not be the sole arbiter of what is an “extraordinary circumstance.”

8. Issue: Combining Initial Tenure Review and Promotion to Associate Professor

Potential Direction for Discussion by Faculty Groups:

- A. 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.
- B. 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 independent, promotion review within 1-2 years of the tenure decision.

The Faculty Affairs Committee requests language regarding this issue from the Faculty Handbook Review Committee.

- Language should be clear regarding:
 - The review for promotion to Associate Professor and tenure should occur at the same time.
 - A petitioner cannot receive tenure and not promotion and vice versa.

9. Issue: Terminal Degree Definitions

Potential Direction for Discussion by Faculty Groups:

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.

The Faculty Affairs Committee requests language regarding this issue from the Faculty Handbook Review Committee.

- Language should be clear regarding:
 - Discipline appropriate terminal degrees should be clearly identified in department promotion and tenure guidelines.