

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee: March 6, 2009.

Present: Bartanen, Bodine, Christoph, Edgoose, Goldstein, Haltom, Tomlin, Wood

The meeting was convened at 1:05 PM.

There were no announcements.

The minutes of 2/13/09 were approved as circulated.

The minutes of 2/20/09 were approved with minor amendments.

The PSC continued its discussion of Feb 20 concerning Charge # 5, "*Departmental Professional Guidelines.*"

Dean Bartanen reported that she surveyed department chairs and program directors at a recent chairs meeting on concerns about a possible posting of departmental guidelines on the on-campus internet. Although two or three faculty expressed some initial concerns, the vast majority appeared to be in favor of such a move to invite discussions on professional growth within the campus community. PSC reiterated that publishing departmental guidelines lies within its jurisdiction, but that it welcomes the feedback of colleagues before finalizing its decision. The Faculty Senate is expected to discuss this initiative on March 9, 2009.

It was remarked that although Puget Sound has traditionally been in favor of improving communication and information, such a posting could possibly lead to tensions between departments that have recently increased their expectations of professional growth and those that chose not to embrace such a motion based on concerns for sustained excellence in teaching. PSC recommends that faculty engage in a campus-wide discussion of excellence in professional growth, but wants to strongly encourage colleagues to stay away from judgment and undue competition. It was also suggested that a comparison of evaluation guidelines between two different departments at UPS would perhaps not be as meaningful and informative as contrasting a department's guidelines with those of a similar department at a peer institution.

PSC seemed to converge to an agreement about the publication of departmental guidelines. Respecting departmental discretion to self-governance, it appears to be a positive step toward facilitating a broader discussion on what constitutes excellence in professional growth in various disciplines and may perhaps enhance consistency among departments over time.

PSC will make its final decision after hearing the Senate's suggestions.

PSC then turned to charge # 2, "*Definition of tenure-line faculty and status of faculty not granted tenure*"

This charge concerns the role of faculty after not being granted tenure, during their remaining time at Puget Sound. Particularly important issues include participation of these colleagues in evaluations, searches, and other important departmental decisions. A similar question arises, at least to some degree, for faculty members approaching retirement.

The Faculty Code defines in chapter I, part B, section 1 that “Tenure-line faculty members are those appointed to the ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor, who are eligible for reappointment and promotion to higher rank, and who are eligible for tenure consideration.” Hence, faculty members do not remain tenure-line faculty members when not being granted tenure. However, according to this definition, full professors are also not tenure-line because they cannot be promoted to a higher rank. This not only makes this definition highly problematic, it also does not allow to perhaps distinguish between privileges of faculty not granted tenure from these of other faculty members.

Possible approaches to clarify the role of such faculty not granted tenure include:

- a) Initiating a general discussion, on the Senate as well as departmental level, to discuss general and ethical responsibilities of such faculty.
- b) PSC drafting language for a Code amendment to effectively differentiate between tenure-line and not-tenure-line faculty and their respective roles. Recalling that code interpretations are in the jurisdiction of PSC, this possibility was not viewed as ideal by several PSC members because of a possible conflict of interest.
- c) An addition to the buff document with a recommendation of a possible process. It might suggest, for instance, that a colleague not granted tenure would normally not participate in evaluations unless a department explicitly requests the expertise of this colleague.
- d) PSC issuing a Code interpretation. This option raised some concern because it would be based on the problematic code language quoted above.
- e) Encouraging departments to specify in their guidelines who is eligible to participate in evaluations.
- f) PSC proposing to the Faculty Senate to draft the language for such a code amendment. It appeared that this option was considered favorably by several PSC members.

It was remarked that a distinction between the tenure-line position and the faculty member might be helpful in this context. For instance, the position would be vacant during the “seventh year.”

It was noted that, in most instances, there are no problems on the departmental level associated with faculty not granted tenure or near retirement colleagues. Typically, these colleagues have no interest to interfere with ongoing departmental business in a negative manner. However, problems of this nature might surface, and departments should prepare in advance how to respond to such challenges.

The question of the right procedure was raised repeatedly. Since some members of the PSC were not able stay for the entire length of the meeting, a decision on this was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sigrun Bodine