

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee
April 16, 2007

PRESENT: Kris Bartanen, Sigrun Bodine, Doug Cannon, Grace Kirchner, George Tomlin

Kirchner convened the meeting at 11:07 a.m.

Announcements

(1) Dean Bartanen informed the committee that the Human Resources department had drafted a policy on employee background screening. It is proposed to begin with staff in July, 2007 and with faculty in fall, 2008. The policy will be placed on the fall agenda of the PSC for review. The reason for the timing is not that there have been incidents where pre-screening would have been indicated, but that it is becoming more the norm among university human resources departments.

(2) New Foreign Language and Literature Department Faculty Evaluation Guidelines were received by the PSC. They will be taken up at the next committee meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of April 9, 2007 were approved as presented.

Old Business

(1) Revisions to Chapter 3, Faculty Code, for Faculty Meeting Tuesday, April 17

Committee members wished to clarify the change from one to three alternates in hearing board formations. The idea for this change originated in a year with many hearing boards, where the PSC chair felt that losing a board for lack of alternates could have resulted in running out of roster names. Alternates have no “work liability” unless they are actually seated on a board, in fact, alternates do not even know they have been so designated unless they are moved to sit on a board. It was confirmed in the discussion that if a seated hearing board member needed to leave the board after the probable cause determination phase, but before the start of a hearing itself, an alternate would replace that member.

Committee members then reviewed last year’s faculty discussions about the confidentiality clause pertaining to hearings. It had been considered controversial because of the vagueness of the terms “indirect” statements, “public” statements, whether matters of the process of a hearing board being problematic would be equally banned from discussion, whether the appellant would be free to talk about the hearing but not representatives of the department or administration. With so many conflicting objections at the time there was no way to change the statement that would have garnered majority support. Thus in this revision the wording from the current Code is unchanged.

For the April 17 Faculty meeting, all faculty will have received the revision summary and side-by-side amendment text by email. PSC members Cannon, Bodine, and Bartanen will

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be in attendance for this first reading. Dean Finney will bring some extra copies of the summary, the side-by-side, and the Code. Cannon will provide an opening statement, and ask for any feedback from the faculty to better set the stage for the May 1 meeting for the second reading.

(2) Dean's proposed use of new Associate Dean to write evaluation letters for streamlined files

At this point Dean Bartanen recused herself from the rest of the meeting.

The committee determined that the current burden on the Dean for writing letters in streamlined cases has become substantial, and that the prospect is for this burden to continue indefinitely. It did seem advisable not to have the Dean of the University permanently using inordinate amounts of time performing this task, important as it is, to the detriment of other Dean functions. Could a Code interpretation suffice to allow the Associate Dean to handle some of this burden?

If the Associate Dean were to review the file and prepare the letter for the Dean's signature, that could be considered as the performance of a supporting function to the Dean. If the Dean were ultimately responsible for the contents of the letter, though, how much review work could the Associate Dean actually spare the Dean?

If the Associate Dean were to be the one to sign the letters, then more than a Code interpretation seems necessary, i.e., a Code revision would be in order.

How the Code could be changed was discussed. If the wording "the Dean or the Associate Dean" were used, which Associate Dean would that refer to? If the wording "the Dean or the Dean's designate" were used, that would seemingly allow people of unknown credentials and experience for faculty evaluation summary letter writing to be tapped. Perhaps "the Dean or the designated Associate Dean" would be preferable.

Members then discussed whether it wouldn't be better yet for the Dean to designate a member of the FAC to be the supplementary letter writer. They would all have experience writing such letters, and have all undergone a faculty election and Dean selection process. Implications for the workload of FAC members were discussed.

Kirchner agreed to report our discussion to absent members Edgoose and Fields and then brief Dean Bartanen about our discussions before the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

George Tomlin