

Faculty Personnel Committee

2006-2007

Report to the Senate

The Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC) has completed its work for the 2006-2007 academic year. The FPC consists of ten elected faculty members and two student representatives (when possible). No students participated on the committee this year. Each faculty member has one vote. Five faculty members were chosen from the College of Arts and Sciences and five from the professional schools. The faculty on this year's committee were: Lynne Anderson-Inman (Teacher Education), Carl Bjerre (Law School), Jon Brundan (Mathematics), Ken Doxsee (Chemistry), Debra Merskin (Journalism), Patricia Gwartney (Sociology), Michael Hames-Garcia (Ethnic Studies), Steve Larson (Music), John Postlethwait (Biology), and Rob Ribe (Landscape Architecture). Ken Doxsee served as Chair. The FPC was also assisted in its work by the professional handling of the details of processing the files and scheduling and organization of our meetings by Sandy Burr, Artema Snook and Miriam Bolton.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, the FPC advised the Provost on 46 cases involving tenure and/or promotion. The breakdown of the cases was as follows:

Professor with tenure	0
Professor	14
Associate with tenure	26
Tenure only	6

Over the academic year, the FPC held 2 organizational meetings, 16 meetings to discuss case files, and 1 final summary meeting with the Sr. Vice President & Provost, Linda Brady, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Russ Tomlin. The meetings involving the case files lasted approximately two hours during which three cases were generally discussed. In addition, each member of the committee spent approximately two to three hours per week reading files. Members of the committee were also responsible for writing the FPC reports for an average of five cases, a task that required substantial time (approximately 4-5 hours per case) beyond the commitment to reading and assessing the files.

The expectation of the committee is that the files would be prepared according to the guidelines found in the *Faculty Guide to Promotion and Tenure* and the *Timetable and Guidelines for Recommending Promotion and/or Tenure for Faculty Members*, both from the Office of Academic Affairs. The opportunity to go over large numbers of files has made clear that there are some departments and schools that consistently follow the guidelines and others that are either inconsistent in their procedures or consistent in the failure to follow the proper procedures. The committee strongly urges everyone connected with the preparation of tenure and promotion files to follow these guidelines carefully and we would like to applaud those departments that have done so. The lack of clarity created by a poorly prepared file is to the detriment of the candidate and harms the integrity and the efficiency of the promotion process.

In the interest of improving the promotion process, the 2006 FPC Final Report included a set of recommendations in regards to possible modifications of current procedures that might improve process and help facilitate departments and schools. This year's FPC feels that these recommendations retain their value and reiterate them at the end of this report, particularly since relatively little progress appears to have been made toward their realization. Additional issues for which the FPC urges consideration, some global, others more specific, are presented below.

1. Electronic Technologies to Assist File Review

Last year's report discussed the use of computer-based technologies to standardize the promotion and tenure process. This year's committee wishes to stress the positive impact such a change would make in easing the extreme workload FPC service represents to committee members.

As noted elsewhere in this report, FPC members devote a substantial number of hours each week to the Committee's work, and the current system of having each file exist only in paper form is a needless impediment to getting that work done. In an electronic age, committee members should not be expected to walk across campus to a designated building during fixed office hours in order to read files; nor should they need to do this twice in a row when checking out files for overnight review. Instead, given their already busy schedules, committee members need to be able to take care of their file-reviewing labor when their own schedules permit, without elaborate planning. To this end, the FPC strongly urges the administration to make the files available in a secure electronic format.

There seem to be two issues here, both of which should be readily resolvable with a little sustained attention. The first issue is the actual uploading of the files. [Vice Provost's office to handle, after making sure the paper is correctly assembled? Some campus units don't have the scanning technology.] The second issue, of course, is security, and this should be readily addressable with temporary-duration passwords issued to Committee members. We do not think that security concerns justify restrictions on printing, because hard copies of long documents are much easier to read and Committee members can arrange for shredding of the printed versions as is routinely done with other confidential information.

We would urge adoption of such a system as soon as possible, perhaps even before the FPC resumes its work in the late Fall of 2007. We do recommend that, even when the electronic access system is in place, the traditional hardcopies of files be maintained, thereby increasing the number of options available to FPC members for their review of files. In the long run, we feel that simplifying access to files could lead to a larger pool of willing nominees for FPC service.

2. Level of Involvement in Cases Involving Departmental Colleagues

The FPC urges that members of the DAC, FPC, and their equivalents, be required, rather than simply

encouraged, to participate in discussions and voting on tenure and promotion cases at the lower level. A member of one of these advisory committees should discuss and vote on a colleague's case at the Departmental level, not at the advisory committee level. Participation at the higher level presents too high a risk of inappropriate skewing – in either a positive or a negative direction – of discussion and final case dispensation.

3. Critical Analysis

In some cases considered this year, the FPC felt that evaluations at the Departmental, DAC, and/or Dean's level appeared to lack real analysis, instead appearing to present overly optimistic summaries, neglecting comment on problematic issues, rather than critical reviews. To the extent possible, those involved with evaluation at each level must be encouraged to praise that which is praiseworthy and discuss critically that which is not. Deans' analyses should specifically address the standards and guidelines in the UO Guide to Promotion and Tenure.

Issues raised by a file really must be taken by the horns and addressed at the earliest levels of review. Ignoring potentially thorny issues, perhaps hoping they will be overlooked in higher levels of review, is inappropriate and leaves the door open for potentially harmful speculation rather than informed decision making. In this vein, minority votes in split decisions, particularly at the departmental level, should be routinely documented. In the absence of such documentation, these alternative opinions run the risk of, and indeed perhaps should be discounted by the FPC.

On the other end of the spectrum, the FPC notes that, particularly in the case of very strong candidates, the promotion and tenure files are often highly redundant. We suggest that consideration be given to ways to avoid redundancy in reports from the Department, DAC, Dean, and FPC levels.

4. Authorship **and related issues**

Candidates and department heads should be required to provide a statement regarding authorship order and its meaning in their discipline. Clear identification of the principal author and of student authors would facilitate analysis of the publication record. Consideration should be given to whether formal descriptions of the meaning of terms such as "in press," "submitted," "forthcoming," and the like would be useful. If exhibitions, etc. are included as components of the creative/scholarly activities portfolio, their nature must be clearly established in the file – Peer-reviewed? Invited? Extent of competition and prestige?

Scholarly and creative works should be cited in such a way as to make clear which work was carried out during the time interval under review and which pre-dated the review period. In cases where years of service have been credited or where employment is at less than 1.0 FTE, this review period can be difficult to ascertain and should be clearly established in the file.

5. Misunderstandings of Expectations for File Preparation

In general, the “Conditions of Appointment” tab is taken to refer to the candidate’s contract. It is not uncommon, however, for files instead to contain a statement to the effect of, “There are no unusual conditions.” Realistically, the data to be gleaned from the contract are primarily the date of hire and any years of service credit; perhaps we should simply request this information.

The desired nature of the candidate’s statement seems to require clarification. Some candidates provide statements in lay terms, while others provide densely technical statements. Since the statement is sent to the external reviewers, one recognizes the candidate’s desire to present a compelling professional case, yet such a statement is rarely accessible to the entire FPC. Preparation of two statements – one technical, the other lay – would appear to represent an extreme burden to the candidate. Some discussion and guidance as to how a candidate can prepare a statement that best serves both roles would appear to be called for. Candidates should be cautious about describing the virtues of their work in ways that only the external reviewers can understand and appreciate. They should not rely on the external reviewers to explain the significance of their achievements in ways that non-specialist committee members can understand or appreciate.

6. Borderline Candidates

Clearly some candidates soar over “the bar” while others narrowly clear it. The FPC feels it is particularly important for the latter candidates to receive substantive feedback. It is a shame to have so many layers of review and evaluation, with each layer often providing information that could help the candidate shape a more powerful career, yet have no mechanism for transmitting this information to the candidate.

7. Criteria for Promotion and Tenure

Inclusion of departmental statements regarding tenure and promotion criteria was encouraged this year, and it is the FPC’s understanding that it will be required beginning next year. This is a good thing. However, it will be necessary to establish at what level these statements have been approved, as they otherwise run the risk of being at odds with University standards. These statements, serving as the “rules of the game” for candidates, must include substantive information regarding both tenure and promotion including promotion to full professor. Files omitting such statements or lacking clarity therein can substantively complicate review and analysis.

8. External Evaluations

Whenever possible, declinations to evaluate files should be documented – e.g., through provision of copies of email correspondence. Honest appraisals of potentially biasing relationships with the

candidate must be insisted upon and clearly documented. Consideration should be given to standardizing the establishment of each reviewer's "relationship with the candidate," and this information should be provided clearly and up-front, regardless of when the existence of any relationship was established. (E.g., "While Professor X was chosen by the Department as a reviewer with no known connection to the candidate, his letter revealed that he and the candidate were roommates in graduate school.") Such information does not in itself diminish the significance of the reviewer's evaluation, and honest presentation of any relationships helps avoid potential speculation in higher levels of review.

When reviewers are recruited from non-peer institutions, the department head should explain clearly why they were viewed as appropriate.

9. End-of-Year Meeting for Successful Candidates

One of the great joys of FPC service is the opportunity it affords to learn about the many wonderful things being done by our faculty. We feel that consideration should be given to the organization of an informal symposium for newly tenured and/or promoted faculty, at which short presentations would afford opportunities for these faculty and other interested members of the campus community to hear about activities beyond their own daily, departmentally-focused worlds. Alternately, and perhaps more realistically, a pamphlet presenting research overviews for the successful candidates could be prepared and made available in either print or electronic form. The recent institution of an end-of-year celebration for successful candidates is warmly applauded.

10. Teaching Evaluation

Critical assessment of quantitative teaching scores would be facilitated by insistence on standardization of data presentation – a summary table presenting a consistently chosen set of scores, together with clear information as to what comparisons are being made (e.g., "scores for instructor quality and course quality, compared to other courses at the 100-300 level").

Misuse of Z scores, particularly in smaller classes, appears rampant. Clarification of the importance (or insignificance) of Z scores should be provided.

Peer evaluations of teaching are sometimes carried out with care throughout a candidate's evaluation period; perhaps more often they are carried out as an afterthought in the final term or two before a promotion or tenure package is prepared. Efforts should be made to ensure that peer evaluation is viewed as an important ongoing venture rather than a last-minute one-time nuisance.

11. Quorum Requirement

As a committee of 10, the FPC currently works with a quorum requirement of 7. The FPC is split as to

whether a recommendation of a lower quorum (6 instead of 7) should be made. On the positive side, a lower quorum would allow work to proceed even with faculty shouldering significant other academic loads that occasionally require their absence. Arguing against a change is the potential loss of some breadth of perspective. Should *in absentia* voting be allowed, such votes would be made without the benefit of the collective wisdom of the full committee. Conference call capability could perhaps deal with all of these issues.

The FPC elected **Rob Ribe** to serve as chair in 2007-2008 academic year.

Submitted by Kenneth M. Doxsee, FPC Chair, AY06-07
September 5, 2007

Recommendations From 2006 FPC

1. Use of Computer-Based Technologies to Standardize the Promotion Process: *The Faculty Guide to Promotion and Tenure* is a useful resource. However, its printed form does not really take advantages of new computer technology that might more readily communicate the information and standardize the process. Specifically, an online procedure could likely be developed that would walk departments through the process of completing the file to insure that all the proper documents are included in the file in the proper order and in sufficient detail. There are examples of such computer-based e-technologies being applied to other complex processes that have been quite effective. For example, the NSF's Fastlane experience that expedites grant writers putting together a grant proposal. Obviously, such an electronic process would have to be done carefully and would have to be sufficiently flexible to account for the heterogeneity in the promotion criteria across schools and colleges. Nonetheless, if done right, such a procedure might well remedy a significant and reoccurring headache of the FPC and the other evaluative participants in the process that some files are not properly prepared. For example, online submission of the components of the promotion file would permit the participants in the process to be reminded of their objective that:

- a. The candidate's statement should be written to reach multiple audiences. The statement will be sent to external reviewers and read by the department, so some level of sophistication is appropriate. However, the FPC is composed of colleagues who are not experts in the candidate's field, so a more general explanation (or at least a generalist's introduction) is helpful if the candidate's statement does not reach the general audience.
- b. The number of outside letters should be between 5 and 7 (unless special circumstances dictate otherwise), that the department (not the candidate) should choose the majority of outside letter writers, and the relationship between the candidate and the letter writer should be clearly spelled out.
- c. Each department or program should provide an explanation of the relative weighting to be given to various types of publications: research books, textbooks, such as peer-reviewed book chapters, peer-reviewed articles, non-peer-reviewed articles, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, extended abstracts, and so forth. When the file includes creative work, it should also be detailed and clearly explained in the file. *The candidate's CV should make clear what kind of publication each item is.* The evaluative report of department committees likewise should make clear how the different kinds of publications in the candidate's record are to be evaluated in the field.
- d. Peer reviews of teaching are a required part of the each file. It is useful to have more than one peer review. Solicited letters from students, especially graduate students, while not required, has proven a useful evaluative measure.
- e. Service (including university service) is an important component for promotion to Full Professor and it should be understood that the FPC (who is engaging in a high level of

service) will unlikely be sympathetic that the persons making the argument were busy in research and teaching. If the candidate has engaged in a high level of service (broadly defined), it should be spelled out.

- f. If it is standard to pay a reviewer, this should be spelled out in the file.
- g. Interdisciplinary programs often are evaluated by several different units. The file needs to spell out the responsibility of these units in the evaluation of the candidate and whether expectations differ for the candidate in the unit they serve in as opposed to the home department for which they are a specialist.

In addition, the process of creating a computer-based online file preparation process might also provide the opportunity to streamline the process. For example, there is needless and extensive repetition in the files, which might be minimized by an online resource that could remind each participant in the process of their primary role. In addition, it would provide a means of standardizing the presentation of certain data in the file that is often presented in ways that are hard to follow. For example, there are often disagreements in the file about the number of publications, the type of publications, and their timing because vitae's differ distinctly across individuals (even within the same department). An online menu could be developed that would permit a more standardized accounting of publications that would eliminate errors and inconsistencies in evaluating the research record. This numerical summary would not replace the vitae, but supplement it. Likewise, numerical teaching evaluations could also be presented in a standardized way (e.g., presenting the candidate's mean course and instructor quality marks in comparison to the department average, and the number of students enrolled in a course, etc.).

2. Separate Tabbed Section for Department Expectations for Tenure: The department is supposed to include the department's expectation for tenure in the file. It would be useful to have this set separately in the file. If this candidate has special or different service expectations due to a unique job description, these special duties should be spelled out in the file.

3. Guidelines for Promotion in the Case of Outside Hires: University-wide guideline for time-to-promotion for outside hires should be developed and these issues should be discussed between the department, dean, and provost. For example, an assistant professor hired with three or more years of credit can be considered for tenure in the first year of appointment at the UO. Given that the tenure file is compiled early in the fall semester, the department, college, FPC, and provost will have virtually no information about the candidate's teaching performance or service contributions at the UO. Departments may want to consider bringing in new hires with sufficient years of experience as associates without tenure, and then have the person reviewed for tenure during the second year at the UO. Senior administration needs to be involved in this process and this understanding must be spelled-out in the file.

4. Development of New Promotion and Tenure Procedure for Newly Hired Senior

Administrators: The standard tenure and promotion process is not effective in the evaluation of senior administrative hires. In such cases, there is generally a paucity of evaluative material in the file reflecting the unrealistic expectation that departments, faculty committees, and lower-placed administrators can proceed in an unbiased and unfettered manner when making a decision for a top administrator who has de facto already been hired. Thus, the FPC recommends that some consideration be given to modifying the process when top members of the administration are being considered for a tenured academic position at the UO. For example, such an evaluative process could be conducted at the time a list of finalists for the position has been selected and prior to the senior administrator's hire. It would be best if the evaluative committee was comprised of faculty elected to positions of senior leadership so as to maintain an independent faculty voice. For example, a committee could be comprised of the University Senate President, the Chair of the FPC, the Chair of the FAC, and the Chair of the Dean's Advisory Committee in the relevant college. The FPC recommends that the Senate take action to formalize this process.

- 5. Course Reduction or other Time Release for FPC Members:** The FPC has been fortunate over the years to have diligent members who have served their university well. However, the time commitment for the FPC in this particular year was on the order of 5 to 6 hours a week for 20 weeks. While this particular year had a particularly large case load, a typical year requires a 5 to 6 hour commitment per week for 12 weeks. This time requirement is similar to teaching an additional course over the year. Thus, to insure a supply of willing and able faculty who have a sufficient amount of time to properly fulfill their duties, it would be in the UO's best interest to formalize a course release program or some other time release program for future FPC members during Winter term (when the work load is typically greatest). The financial responsibility for the course release might be shared by the department and the Provost's office.
- 6. Adopt Procedures for Departments that Consistently Have Poorly Prepared Files** As indicated above, there are some departments and schools that consistently follow the guidelines and others that are either inconsistent in their procedures or consistent in the failure to follow the proper procedures. It is recommended that the FPC begin to keep a list of "poorly prepared files" and that departments that fall on this list be explicitly informed of the shortcomings of the file. If a department persists in providing poorly prepared files, there should be a formalized process to address the issue. For example, the Provost's office might request (strongly encourage) that a member of the department serve on the FPC and agree to serve on the next departmental promotion committee.
- 7. Remove Students Participants from the FPC.** While students de facto do not participate in the process, the Committee questions whether they should be permitted to participate in the promotion process. The objection to having students on the committee arises from the fact that students, who by the nature of their station, do not have an incentive to look at the long term effects of promotion and tenure. Moreover, there are often controversial and personal details

that often must be revealed in the promotion process that undermines a faculty member's and department's ability to instruct students. Lastly, students do not have experience in fulfilling the triad of responsibilities that are required of faculty members which is necessary to competently evaluate a faculty member. Thus, it is the recommendation of the committee that student representatives formally be excluded from the process.

8. Include Annual and Third-Year Reviews in File if Referred to in the File. In certain instances, the chair or others have referred to Annual Reviews or Third-Year Reviews to stake out a position. In such case, these reviews should be included in the file.