

Notes*

**Tenure Committee
Monday, September 15, 2003
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Ron Akehurst (chair), Carol Carrier, Tom Clayton, Will Durfee, Nancy Ehlke, Robert Jones, Bernard Selzler, Jennifer Westendorf

Absent: Dale Carpenter, Carston Wagner

Guests: none

1. Minutes

The minutes of the May 19, 2003 meeting were approved.

2. Committee Charge

Professor Akehurst noted that Professor Martin, chair of the Senate Consultative Committee, had asked all committees to review their charge as part of a larger restructuring of the Senate that will be considered later in the fall. He said this is a serious committee with a serious charge that must carry out its responsibilities with respect to the tenure code. He then reviewed the items in the charge.

- review periodically the tenure regulations (how often is "periodically"? Perhaps the Committee should review parts of the code in a cycle.
- review periodically the tenure and promotion system for faculty appointments (and related policies) and make recommendations
- review proposals from any source for amendments to the tenure code
- review annually the use of contract and non-faculty instructional appointments in all departments and colleges (the Committee needs to do this; this is also of interest to the Committee on Faculty Affairs in connection with the consideration of a three-semester calendar)
- provide Interpretations of the tenure code (this would be on an as-needed basis)
- advise senior academic administrators with regard to issues of academic tenure and rank
- monitor the post-tenure review system (Dr. Jones prepares an annual report for the Board of Regents; the Committee will start with that report).

There was no sentiment to suggest any revisions to the charge.

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

3. Agenda Items for the Year

Professor Akehurst suggested a number of items for the year, some of which engendered discussion.

-- Post-tenure review: Dr. Jones said that some have gone through the process; he was not aware of any case that resulted in the person being let go or dismissed for cause, but there have been cases where there were changes in an individual's responsibilities and there are also some who are currently in professional development programs. The information will be presented in the spring.

There is a range of uses of post-tenure review, Professor Clayton suggested, from reviewing everyone every three years to initiating when a unit wants to get rid of someone. There should be some general understanding what it is all about; at present post-tenure review can be used excessively and inappropriately. Dr. Jones said he has informed departments that post-tenure review should be a part of the annual review process; some departments chose to implement the process differently, such as reviewing one-third of the faculty each year. He emphasized once again that post-tenure review is not intended as a process to get rid of people--it is not an effective tool for doing so and simply adds three to four years to the termination process if it is used for that purpose. Professor Selzler suggested that there be a process to follow, a document that lays out the procedure for post-tenure review.

If annual reviews are adequate, an additional review every three years seems excessive, Professor Clayton maintained; for those units that use a three-year cycle, every faculty member must in essence collate and integrate the annual review documents into an additional report. Dr. Jones agreed that the additional cycle is excessive. He has spoken with departments that do post-tenure reviews every three years and some have abandoned them; such additional reviews, he noted, are not what is intended by the tenure code. Dr. Jones said he would bring this issue to the Twin Cities Deans Council as an issue of interest to the Tenure Committee.

On the other hand, Dr. Jones pointed out, if departments choose to have a cycle of post-tenure review in addition to annual reviews--which is not in conflict with the tenure code--and the faculty in the department have voted for such a cycle, who has the authority or responsibility to tell the department it may not adopt the practice? He agreed, however, that it is important for the institution to know the extent to which there are additional post-tenure review cycles.

-- Section 7 of the tenure code (Personnel Decisions Concerning Probationary Faculty) occupies the most attention, Professor Akehurst said, so it should probably be the section the Committee reviews first. Dr. Carrier said the Committee should know the procedures that are presently in place to ensure that new faculty understand the process, as well as the information provided to deans and department heads. They provide programs for probationary faculty, Dr. Jones reported, and for faculty being considered for promotion from associate to full professor; they also have training for department heads. The department head is a mentor and the person who must bring the file forward but must also be a neutral.

-- Distribution of the Committee's minutes: At present the minutes are distributed only to the Committee on Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Consultative Committee. The Committee concluded that they should also be posted on the web, as are all other committee minutes, and that if there are sensitive issues that require discussion, the Committee will either close the meeting or go off the record.

-- The standards to be applied in review of tenured faculty (following the provisions of Section 7a.2, Annual Review): The Committee had a note from last year with a draft proposal saying that the standards to be used should be either those in effect when tenure was granted or when the faculty member was most recently promoted. It may be that a faculty member was hired or last promoted 25 years ago, in a different time, and now does not conform to the standards in a department, and is perhaps unable to. What does the Committee wish to say about this situation?

Professor Westendorf said she thought the proposal from last year was not what had been agreed to and the standards that should apply are the ones most recently approved by the faculty in the department. Dr. Jones agreed, noting that all tenured faculty get to vote on the standards, so it is a case of majority rule. What if the faculty member voted against the standards; is he or she still to be judged by them, Professor Akehurst asked? Committee members seemed to agree that he or she should be. This could be troublesome, Professor Akehurst said; there may be older faculty who are not performing up to the level of current standards but whose performance is satisfactory by the standards of his or her promotion.

Professor Clayton did not agree, however, that the faculty member should necessarily be subject to the standards most recently voted upon by the faculty. When one is hired, one is--at least in some departments--told in a letter what is expected, not what might be expected five or ten years later. This statement needs more scrutiny, he said, adding that it would be helpful to know what University practices are in this connection.

Professor Akehurst agreed and said it would be on the agenda of the next meeting. He said he would rewrite the proposal.

Professor Akehurst adjourned the meeting at 2:50.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota