

Minutes*

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee
Friday, May 12, 2006
9:30 - 11 a.m.
238A Morrill Hall

Present: William Durfee (chair), Tracey Anderson, Arlene Carney, Tom Clayton, Nancy Ehlke, G. Edward Schuh, Ronald Siegel, Jennifer Westendorf, Jianyi Zhang

Absent: Carol Carrier, John Mowitt, Ruth Okediji

Guests:

[In these minutes: (1) Report on 2005-2006 Promotion and Tenure Cases (2) AF&T Work for 2006-2007]

Professor Durfee convened the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

1. Report on 2005-2006 Promotion and Tenure Cases

Vice Provost Carney discussed promotion and tenure cases and distributed information which had been presented to the Board of Regents. She noted that some units don't have collegiate promotion and tenure committees, and in those schools, the dean makes recommendations which go to the University promotion and tenure committee. The recommendation then goes to the Provost's office. No matter what the school or unit, there are always three levels of review. She discussed the figures in the information presented and said that there was an average of 150-170 promotion and tenure cases over the past 10 years but that there were 203 cases in 2005-2006. Vice Provost Carney reviewed the figures system-wide as broken down by gender and by race-ethnicity, and the committee discussed the numbers. Vice Provost Carney reviewed the metric for tenure success, which was the percentage of individuals who receive tenure in a given cohort of incoming assistant professors after 6, 7, or 8 years. The percentage was 59.2% for incoming cohorts starting in 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000 (a three-year rolling average). Of those same cohorts, 11% are still here as untenured individuals. This percentage is comparable to other Big 10 institutions, including the University of Michigan. In 2005-2006, 115 assistant professors were evaluated for promotion to associate professor and conferral of indefinite tenure. Of those, 105 were recommended for promotion and tenure (87% of this group). Vice Provost Carney pointed out that as excellent people are hired and the resources for success are provided, there would be a higher rate of tenure.

Vice Provost Carney discussed her review of cases, and variances and fluctuations in cases, noting that there was great complexity in some cases. Only a small number of cases go to the Senate Judicial Committee historically. She noted that she was very impressed by the care and thoroughness of the review process, and described the process of working with the Provost to review cases. Vice Provost Carney added that the Provost has final say on all cases system-wide, including the Academic Health Center (AHC) cases. The exception is for the University of Minnesota-Duluth. She cited the importance of clear 7.12 statements in promotion and tenure, and discussed trends in where faculty receive their degrees. Vice Provost Carney noted that as the University moves toward becoming a top three research institution, it is a good time to try and get the big picture.

Professor Anderson asked if there were a significant number of faculty who went up early for tenure. Vice Provost Carney said that 17% of the group evaluated in 2005-2006 went up for tenure after 4 or 5 years. The committee discussed which faculty may opt to “stop the clock”, and Vice Provost Carney said that it was mostly women but that four or five men had done so also. This year, 14 faculty members had stopped the tenure clock. She said that some untenured faculty were unfamiliar with 7.12 statements, and that the goal was to make all 7.12 statements available to all faculty, especially new faculty, by putting them in one place. Professor Durfee said that it was a good time to look at procedures, etc, and pointed out that some procedures are on the Academic Freedom and Tenure website.

Vice Provost Carney continued to review the rate of tenure success and noted various breakdowns in faculty composition. The committee discussed various figures and faculty exit interviews and attrition rates. Vice Provost Carney discussed women in academia and the dilemmas facing them. Professor Siegel discussed issues facing foreign students in graduate studies and the difficulty in getting applicants from certain pools, and Vice Provost Carney acknowledged that young faculty have different lifestyles and that the tenure code was written for a different era. The committee discussed the background and training of graduate students and certain messages conveyed by faculty to students about life as an academic. The committee discussed opportunities and challenges for various groups coming up through the academic ranks. Vice Provost Carney also told the committee about her work with the Women’s Faculty Cabinet.

Vice Provost Carney discussed continuous appointments, noting that fewer than 4 percent of academic professionals are on continuous appointments, and about half of those are in the University Libraries.

Professor Durfee asked about the Board of Regents involvement in the promotion and tenure process, and Vice Provost Carney said that the Regents were very engaged and extremely interested in the process, and asked excellent questions. She noted that the Regents were very engaged in the excellence of the University.

Professor Zhang asked if there was a common reason for failure to achieve tenure and Vice Provost Carney said it seemed to be issues of scholarship and poor teaching. She pointed out that there were better and more consistent means of evaluating scholarship than teaching. There was not yet a good way to evaluate the breadth of faculty teaching and much of the weight in evaluations of teaching comes from student evaluations. Vice Provost Carney referred to the workshop conducted by Dr. Raoul Arreola on teaching evaluations and said that Dr. Arreola does not think that student comments should be used; this is clearly controversial here at the University of Minnesota. He indicated that student evaluations plus true peer evaluation should be used. Vice Provost Carney said that she felt that the Academy of Distinguished Teachers should establish best practices guidelines in evaluations. It would not have to be a cookie cutter approach, she said, but it would be helpful to establish certain guidelines.

2. AF&T Work for 2006-2007

The committee discussed its work for 2006-2007. Professor Durfee said that the committee would have to prioritize issues for the upcoming year.

Items for the consideration of the committee include:

- Sec. 5.5 of the tenure code (stopping the clock)
- 7.12 statements
- Post-tenure review process
- Contract faculty and adjunct professors
- Strategic task force recommendations

Professor Durfee asked that any other suggestions be forwarded to him. He thanked the committee for its work over the past year.

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

--Mary Jo Pehl

University of Minnesota