Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AF&T)
November 3, 2017
Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Personnel Plans Update; Pre-Tenure Processes; Post-Tenure Review]

PRESENT: Phil Buhlmann (chair), Jerry Cohen, Joe Gaugler, Ben Intoy, Jessica Larson, Karen Miksch, Gopalan Nadathur, Yuichiro Onishi, Gary Peter, Karin Quick, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Rachna Shah, Kristin Swenson, George Trachte

REGRETS: Anne Barnes, Holley Locher, Nathan Shippee

OTHERS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

1. Personnel Plans Update

Chair Phil Buhlmann called the meeting to order and turned the floor over to Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Rebecca Ropers-Huilman to give an update on the collegiate personnel plans. Ropers-Huilman first thanked the committee for their work reviewing the plans, acknowledging that it was a large and time-consuming project. She said that she and Provost Hanson were in the process of meeting with each dean and chancellor to review the personnel plan from their college or campus. They hope to have the plans formally approved in spring 2018. Ropers-Huilman said she is trying to emphasize the rationale and purpose of the plans as tools for planning and the sharing of effective practices, in order to shift the focus from compliance to a way to solicit help from central administration.

2. Pre-Tenure Processes

Next, Buhlmann reminded the committee that part of its charge is to review the promotion and tenure process each year. Most cases proceed smoothly, he said, but it would be useful for the committee to learn more about those cases that do not go smoothly, in order to give feedback on what could be done differently to improve the outcome of such cases. Ropers-Huilman said that ideally, the promotion and tenure process proceeds thusly:

- The department chair initiates a process that honors the contributions of the candidate
- All reviewers adhere to the standards expected of them
- The department and/or college faculty recognize the good work of their colleague
- At the end of the process, the candidate feels valued, reaffirmed, and committed to the University.

When things go wrong, said Ropers-Huilman, the problem usually stems from one or more of several common roots:

- Annual reviews that are not descriptive, are unrelated to the 7.12 statements, or provide advice that is not helpful, clear or specific
- Problems that are not addressed until too late in the process
- Poor departmental reports at tenure decision points
- Erroneous information or referencing the wrong 7.12 statement
- Poor choice of external reviewer
- Lack of mentoring or poor fit with mentor
- Climate issues.

There are several resources that can help prevent the above problems, including New Faculty Orientation, the Center for Educational Innovation, and extensions to the tenure clock medical and family situations, as well as other extenuating circumstances. Ropers-Huilman expressed confidence in the resources available, but said she is concerned about people who are not aware of these resources, or who for some reason feel that they can or should not use them.

This year, Ropers-Huilman reported, only 3 of 67 faculty who were evaluated for tenure and promotion to associate professor were not recommended for tenure. However, she said, some tenure-track faculty leave the University for other reasons without achieving tenure, and actually only about 60% of tenure-track faculty have achieved tenure within seven years. Buhlmann asked about such cases and wondered what percentage could be considered successes for the individual (offered tenure elsewhere, tenure clock extended, etc.) versus leaving the University as a result of dissatisfaction. Ropers-Huilman responded that as of now, they do not know the answer to that question. She added that last year, a pilot exit interview process was implemented, and that the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Exit and Retention survey would be starting soon. Data from these processes will help inform retention efforts. Buhlmann then asked how many faculty who were not recommend for tenure disputed the decision. Joe Gaugler, chair, Senate Judiciary Committee (SJC), said that there have been no appeals to the SJC in the last two years, and that there has been a dramatic decrease in such appeals over the last several years. He then asked whether there was information regarding gender, race, ethnicity, etc. of those who achieved tenure, and Ropers-Huilman said that she could bring that data to a future meeting if that would be useful to the committee.

Jerry Cohen said he feels that the University offers good mentoring, but one area that could be improved is that often department chairs are unwilling to make tough decisions regarding denial of tenure, and instead opt to pass that decision off to the college. This results in the candidate having no warning that they might not be recommended for tenure. Ropers-Huilman acknowledged that this can be an issue and said that it is important to ensure that all involved in the review process understand the 7.12 criteria and the norms of the unit. Gaugler wondered if the low number of appeals could be attributed to effective mentoring or the clarity in the 7.12 statements. Rachna Shah said that she feels the quality of mentoring varies between departments. Jessica Larson said that she would like to see more clarity around the expectations for mentors, such as at what point it is appropriate to acknowledge that a mentoring relationship is not working, rather than feeling responsible for the success of a candidate who is not a good fit. Ropers-Huilman said that the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity offers guidelines around this issue. She said that her office has also developed an expanded new faculty

program that includes a focus on mentoring relationships, and that UMD has developed a good mentoring structure that could perhaps be expanded system-wide. Gaugler said that there used to be an online training module, based on Carold Bland's book *Faculty Success Through Mentoring*, available through the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI). He offered to contact CTSI to see if it is still available.

Gopalan Nadathur said that another issue is that some people are not even aware of the 7.12 statements and other documents related to the promotion and tenure processes. Karen Miksch said that it would be useful to link directly to the tenure regulations and procedures from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost's website, rather than to the Policy Library. She added that many people conflate merit reviews and annual reviews, and this causes confusion. Cohen suggested that a program for graduate students and postdocs, encouraging them to be receptive to mentoring, could be useful. He referenced a publication called *Making the Right Moves*, which is available as a free PDF online from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, as a possible resource.

3. Post-Tenure Review

Regarding Post-Tenure Review, Buhlmann said the issues that were of interest to him were what happens when people get tenure who shouldn't (as possibly indicated by associate professors who never move on to full professor) and/or when an issue arises at an annual review post-tenure? He emphasized that a post-tenure review only happens when there is a problem, and is not the same as the regular annual reviews that take place post-tenure. Ropers-Huilman said that the post-tenure review process has a rich policy framework; the goals, expectations, and processes are documented in all 7.12 statements; and fits nicely into the tenure code. However, many department chairs or heads do not want to do post-tenure reviews, because they can be lengthy, often lasting longer than the department chair's term, and also often involve friends or long-time colleagues. Nadathur said that in order to protect academic freedom, post-tenure review should be difficult—if it happened too often, he opined, it would interfere with academic freedom. Buhlmann clarified that a post-tenure review doesn't necessarily have to be punitive—it can be a way to help the candidate reach their goals. Miksch said that the structure of the merit review committee allows for the elected faculty member to see the reviewee three years in a row, thus allowing that person to see their progress, or lack thereof, more clearly. She suggested that department chairs should reference the merit reviews during annual reviews. Ropers-Huilman clarified that department chairs are never solely responsible for initiating a post-tenure review. The standards for prompting one are fairly high, and one should be initiated only after several discussions with the faculty member in question. Yuichiro Onishi wondered, since post-tenure reviews can often last longer than a chair's term, how information is passed to the next chair to ensure continuity. Buhlmann said that good communication is key, and Miksch suggested incorporating Form 12s into the annual review processes, and making the annual review processes more transparent.

Hearing no further discussion, Buhlmann adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office