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Faculty Evaluation Policy

Submitted by: David Dudley/Faculty Welfare Committee

9/17/2001

Motion:

Rationale:

Faculty Welfare Committee for Discussion

Response:

Faculty Evaluation Policy: Dr. David Dudley, Chair, Faculty Welfare Committee

Dr. David Dudley (CLASS) reported that since last spring the Faculty Welfare Committee had been working with the Provost on proposed revisions to the University's promotion and tenure guidelines. The revisions were presented at the June Senate meeting with a request for input from the Senate.

The entire faculty were invited to respond to the document at the beginning of Fall semester. Concerns expressed about the document could be grouped into three areas: Clarification about requirements for length of service and the time schedules for tenure and promotion; questions about the application process; and questions about the weights of various forms of scholarly activity.

These issues have been shared with Bob Haney who promised to convey them to the Provost. Dr. Vaughn Vandegrift (Provost) thanked the committee for their hard work and the improvements they have already made to the document. He then responded to the areas of concern Dr. Dudley described. To address length of service questions, he first distributed a copy of the policy from the University System of Georgia's Academic Affairs Handbook.

This document clarifies when an application for promotion would be considered early and therefore exceptional or in need of strong justification. These dates have been included in the revised tenure and promotion document to clarify this question and to ensure that Georgia Southern's policies are in line with those of the Board of Regents.

Dr. John Brown (COBA) commented that this timeline conflicts with the post-tenure review process.

Dr. Vandegrift then addressed the questions relating to minimum time. He pointed out that Georgia is unique in allowing faculty to receive up to three years of prior service credit towards tenure which may then be used at the discretion of the individual faculty member to shorten the minimum time they must wait before applying for tenure from five years to as few as two years, depending on how much credit was awarded and how much the faculty member chooses to use.

Dr. Ann Pratt (COST) asked about the distinction, if any, between the terms "early" and "minimum" in this context. Dr. Vandegrift responded that there is no distinction.

Dr. Marc Cyr (CLASS) asked for further clarification, indicating that the BOR policy distributed today indicates that applications for promotion to Associate Professor would be considered early if they occurred in less than four years while the Faculty Evaluation Policy indicates that four years of service (or less than five years of service) would be early.

Dr. Vandegrift responded that the Faculty Evaluation Policy describes a "typical case" and that the faculty could recommend promotion in fewer than four years. Dr. Cyr then commented that "minimum" implies a cutoff, precluding earlier applications.

Dr. Saba Jallow (CLASS) asked if a faculty member who applied for tenure in minimum time but was not given tenure would be able to apply again. Dr. Vandegrift responded that yes, one can apply twice for tenure. Dr. Clara Krug (CLASS) recommended that the committee define minimum time in more detail within the document. Other senators added comments encouraging this clarification, including concerns that "minimum" as now expressed may be regarded as hard and fast by future faculty and administrators and therefore the document needs to make it clear that exceptions may be allowed for exceptional performance.

Dr. Vandegrift assured the Senate that he will work with the Faculty Welfare Committee to make this issue as clear as possible. Dr. Vandegrift then addressed questions about

the application process. Questions were raised about why rejected applications should continue to move through the process. The intention of this policy, he said, is to ensure integrity and equity in the tenure and promotion process and to ensure that University-wide policies about tenure and promotion are followed correctly. Other questions were raised about the policy of not adding materials to a completed application without the permission of the Dean. The purpose of this policy is to protect faculty interests in the process by ensuring that the faculty member is solely responsible for preparing materials for their application and that the application is only modified at their request in cooperation with their Dean. Then Dr. Vandegrift addressed the question of what comprises scholarly work and what weight should be given to different scholarly activities. He asserted that scholarship is disciplinarily defined and must be determined by the faculty in the department. Unique aspects such quantity or frequency of work would be addressed in a statement from the department chair, signed by the dean, for reviewers outside of the discipline.

Dr. Clara Krug (CLASS) expressed a concern that in the past department chairs may not have provided an adequate statement about the significance of the scholarship of an individual. Dr. Vandegrift replied that in future copies of that evaluation statement will be provided to the faculty members. He also said that the intention of this process is to clarify what the process will be and what the criteria are, so that new faculty will have the freedom to work within their academic disciplines and departments to meet those expectations.

Dr. John Brown (COBA) asked what the Provost viewed his role in the review process to be. Dr. Vandegrift responded that one of his roles is to ensure that everyone is treated in an equitable and fair manner. He also said that while he has not yet disagreed with a recommending body at Georgia Southern he would not say that would never happen.

Dr. Sandra Peacock (CLASS) asked if the paragraph defining scholarship implied that all things listed there would be given equal weight. Dr. Vandegrift responded that those are only examples and that the value of a contribution to a discipline would be determined by the faculty in that discipline. He further said that to write a document that defines the appropriate manifestations of scholarship within all disciplines would limit the opportunity of faculty to engage in scholarship.

Dr. Sudha Ratan (CLASS) asked about the fact that faculty are rated in teaching from unsatisfactory to excellent and the tenure evaluation criteria define a requirement of superior teaching. Junior faculty are concerned that having been rated as satisfactory

teachers, they will be turned down for tenure. Dr. Vandegrift responded that the University System of Georgia requirements clearly state that superior teaching is a minimum requirement for tenure, and as a teaching University first, we have included that word in our policy for consistency.

Mr. Mike Mills (CLASS) asked about what materials would be sent to the Provost's office and how the Provost would determine that the process has been followed. Dr. Vandegrift responded that the discussion of the process and the clarification of the procedures would probably assure the process will be followed. Although he does not plan to read every file he receives, he will probably review some, but he will rely primarily on the deans and department chairs to ensure that we are doing things the right way.

Dr. Grube added that he also reads these files, that faculty self-governance, as exemplified by the current discussion, had been an early priority of his administration, and that one of the first charges to the Provost on his arrival on campus was to review the promotion and tenure system as practiced across campus to ensure that it was equitable, fair, and widely understood.

Dr. Clara Krug (CLASS) asked about the role of the Deans' Council in the promotion, tenure and post-tenure review processes. Dr. Vandegrift replied that the Deans' Council serves as an advisory group for the Provost in considering promotions.

Dr. Sandra Peacock (CLASS) asked about the meaning of the phrase "ability of the professor to function within the Georgia Southern academic community" in the criteria for the award of tenure. Dr. Vandegrift responded that the phrase refers to collegiality and is required by the University System of Georgia.

Dr. Clara Krug (CLASS) asked about the existence of procedures for post tenure review. Dr. Vandegrift responded that this had not been identified as an area of concern during his visits to departments in the past year, but that he would be happy to work with the Senate on those issues if the Senate would like to raise and consider the issue.