**Faculty Caucus Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, December 8, 2021**

**Approved**

***Call to Order***

Academic Senate chairperson Martha Callison Horst called the meeting to order.

***Approval of Faculty Caucus meeting minutes of 11/03/21 and 11/17/21***

Motion by Senator Cline, seconded by Senator Garrahy, to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Executive Session: Discussion of the Distinguished Professor***Senator Horst:The Illinois Open Meetings Act Section 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) allows for closed meetings to consider the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specificemployees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body.

Motion by Senator Nikolaou, seconded by Senator Garrahy, to go into Executive Session.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The Faculty Caucus had a discussion in Executive Session and returned to Open Session.

Motion by Senator Nikolaou, seconded by Senator Garrahy, to come out of Executive Session. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Information Item:***

[***ASPT Review***](https://academicsenate.illinoisstate.edu/documents/) ***(Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Administration Roberta Trites and University Review Committee members)***Senator Horst: We have received some revised language for Article VIII Section E and Article IX.D.4. So, let’s start with Article VIII. I want to make it clear that the mark up is showing all of the proposed changes to Article VIII, but for this first round we are only discussing the new language that was presented in Section E. Professor Buckley can you describe your thoughts about this new addition?

* [11.29.21.03 ASPT REVIEW\_Section VIII revision](https://academicsenate.illinoisstate.edu/documents/11.29.21.03%20ASPT%20REVIEW%20Section%20VIII%20revision.docx)

Senator Buckley: Sure. So, the changes in section VIII and also in Section IX kind of mirror each other. These are based on feedback received from the Faculty Caucus and suggestions from Professor Trites to phase in the possibility of required external peer review, rather than having it be a sudden change. We did clarify language a bit too, for what the requirements will be in department/school guidelines, what would be required in those guidelines to clarify the process at the department/school level, which is where most of the details would lie.

Dr. Trites: Just to clarify, Senator Horst, are we look only at that which is a revision in purple?

Senator Horst: I don’t have purple but we’re not going to revisit the language in Section A at this time. We’re looking at “E. Effective August 16, 2023,”.

Dr. Trites: Okay.

Senator Nikolaou: I had a clarification question. So, when we say, “Effective August 16, 2023,” does it mean for anyone who is going to be hired for August 16, 2023 we are going to require them to have the external letters, or is it anyone who is going up for tenure or promotion after that date? So, if I was hired in 2022, effective 2023 I’m going to be required to offer an external letter? or are we doing the part where we say you are under the ASPT document under which you were hired? If I was hired in 2022, the rules that are going to apply are going to be for the ASPT that was in effect in 2022 not that. That’s my question.

When it says, Effective August 2023, everyone who is going up for the rank of professor will need to offer the peer evaluations?

Dr. Trites: Yes.

Senator Nikolaou: And then for 2028, everyone who is going for rank of associate professor. So, if we look at the associate professor, if I was hired in 2024, am I going to be required to submit an external letter? Because when I was hired I was under a different ASPT document that said that you do not need to offer an external letter. But then if it says effective August 2028, does it mean that the ASPT document I was hired under is not valid anymore and I’m going to have to offer the letter?

Dr. Trites: So, this was our attempt to prepare people. It is intended to be if you are going up for full after August 16, 2023 and November 1, 2023, you would be required regardless of when you were hired. We have long held the stance that this isn’t like coming in in a college catalogue where the catalogue follows you through your career. We have the stance that this is the only policy that we have. So, this was our attempt. We definitely listened and appreciated and learned from the Caucus. We don’t think it’s a good idea to just say bam. But if you know that you’re going up for full in two years’ time, you have two years’ time to prepare yourself mentally and in terms of networking for this possibility. We were far more concerned about people who are going up for tenure and promotion when the stakes are high. That means it’s all people who are going up for tenure on November 1, 2028; those people would be required to have those external letters. Now, we can tweak that wording any way you recommend making that more clear, but the intent is that we can’t have everybody in the room have a different policy manual. It just doesn’t work. So, that’s why we’re trying to play around with the dates to make it clear that this is something coming down the road.

Senator Nikolaou: Yeah. I just wanted to clarify that it is for everyone. After 2028 you have to give the letters no matter when you were hired.

Dr. Trites: Exactly.

Senator Nikolaou: Okay.

Senator Cline: Dr. Trites, could you elaborate on what caused the decision of the dates? What prompted 2023? In my discipline, and I’m speaking specifically of Art History, and so therefore probably history, the timeline for the text of a significant research project is greater than two years. So, I might suggest possibly giving a bit more leeway, but I just wondered if there was some sort of logic about the 2023 date.

Dr. Trites: Yes, there was, and we worked backwards. We thought it would be best if we went forward effectively six years for the pre-tenure people and then we backed it up five years from that, because we like the idea of departments/schools and colleges having time to kind of practice with the rank of full professor. So, let’s say that the School of Art decides in their local policy that you will submit a list of ten names and the DFSC will prioritize those ten people and the first two or three or four or whatever, the local decision is those are the letters you get, you have supplied the names, ideally—that’s how it frequently works in Arts and Sciences. We thought it would be good because we heard the Caucus

when you were talking about the higher stakes for tenure and promotion. So, we thought it would be good for there to be kind of a five-year practice of it. But I do see your point and I do think you are right. That is awfully quick for a lot of people to have a two year turn around.

Senator Cline: Yeah. I think you can look at this in two ways, you have just articulated the process within the departments/schools, but I’m thinking really about the faculty and the lead time that they might need to prepare themselves for this new threshold that they’re being asked. So, that would be my suggestion to consider by pushing it back maybe one or two more years, given that some of us work in disciplines that three- or four-year timelines are common for research projects.

Dr. Trites: Yeah. I’m just being very practical in my response to what you’re saying. It just hits me that it might be a little bit much to expect us all to have these policies written and in place in such a short timeframe. So, what we really did, we were looking at protecting people getting tenure and we backed it up from there. You have 100% convinced me we backed it up too far. So, we can adjust that, absolutely.

Senator Cline: Thank you.

Senator Blum: I just want to say that particularly the 2028 date, it just kind of kicks the can of the problem. Part of what I think is a major issue with my faculty is that this was not addressed in the first place. Right. That the problem is not preparing the college for this. So, if we set a date, if the Caucus agrees to set these dates, essentially now it’s part of the document. There really is no need to reach out to the DFSCs because we’ve agreed to that. So, while on one hand it does allow for an individual to prepare, but how do you prepare? I mean, how do you prepare for someone that’s going to be external reviewing? Even in an annual review process, we’re going to have a third-year review process, most likely, I don’t see how you prepare for it. This is actually quite a long time. My suggestion if this is what we believe as a community, then let’s work with the colleges who do not already have this. I know CAS does it, but I’ve talked to many of my colleagues in CAS and they say it’s not so bad. So, I don’t really see it as adherently adverse, but I also don’t see it as a widely accepted culture. And if we don’t have it as a widely accepted culture what’s going to happen is the DFSCs are going to minimize it anyway. Right. Then it’s going to be a couth jumping exercise. So, that’s my general concern is that I think my faculty would be more willing to consider the full professor of people who have longer research records, there’s a sense to that. I don’t know. Maybe the University community would be, after some time, after the URC put in some time, if they work with colleges and deans over time, willing to accept this. But I feel like, you’re asking us to approve this when you really didn’t do that the first time. I think that there was a lot of resistance around the Caucus for substantive reasons. I think those reasons are still there.

Professor Oresky: I could give you my perspective on it as somebody who’s went up for tenure with this not as a requirement, but I chose to seek external reviewers independently. I knew, first of all, that this is a common practice for everybody I know teaching at any university in my field. I also felt that if I was only being vetted by people in the institution in my department I didn’t feel like I could make a really strong case for myself. So, this is something that I think many of my colleagues do anyway, and it’s confusing to the external reviewers because they’re used to being solicited independently, like not directly from the faculty member themselves. They’re used to a different kind of process. So, I think this is, at least in my field, it’s very standard. Also, part of the discussion in URC was receiving a lifetime appointment, the idea that you wouldn’t be able to come up with a process with your department where you would provide, for example, ten people in your field who you felt would be good potential reviewers and then your direct committee would choose from among them. As someone who’s been asked to do external review, it seems like something that would make us stronger and if we’re going to be experts, we need to be able to have people from outside our institution speak on our behalf. So, I don’t really see that it’s a burden. It seems to me like it makes sense to institute how we do it and how we make sure that people are supported in their research. I think that, for me, is the bigger question, and those things brought forth are things that we need to address in our departments. In my department, it’s not required but it’s something that I think almost everybody does.

Senator Brehm: I’m chair of Sociology and Anthropology, and I was in the first cohort in my department that required external reviews. I was not hired with that expectation, but it came to be in my pre-tenure years. I found it to be a very valuable process. We have not had any problems tenuring or promoting people with this process in place. Now in the position that I hold, I find those external reviews, and our entire DFSC finds those external reviews to be invaluable in providing a perspective in someone’s scholarship that we sometimes can’t see because we are in the department. They are colleagues, and as much as we try to maintain professionalism, it’s hard sometimes to take those blinders off. I do think that this is very much a culture of higher ed, broadly speaking. So, it may not be a widespread culture here at ISU, but within higher ed in general, and in my interaction with colleagues at other institutions across the country, this is really standard procedure. It also, I think, compels us as faculty to continue to engage in professional conferences. I serve on Boards. I’m editor of journals. So, we network and it helps us to build those networks that we then call upon within the parameters—our department has parameters about who you can have as an external reviewer. But in general, I find it to be an exceedingly positive process and I think my DFSC would second that -- that it really helps us to provide an accurate and unbiased assessment of our colleagues and their professionalism at the different levels.

Senator Aldeman: I come from CAST where we have not been doing the reviews. I did get four comments from constituents. They were all against this, negative toward this proposed change. Most of them are just generally that we don’t want to do this, and we don’t think the department should be obliged to do this. But there were some specific questions that came out of it as well.

One question that came out was whether there would be a requirement that the evaluator is at a particular rank. For example, if they’re required to be a professor or associate.

And then another question was whether a pre-tenure faculty, especially, would know 10 people, if there is a required rank for the evaluator. I say that because some of our fields really are quite small, at least in the department where I come from. So, it legitimately could be quite a challenge to find 10 specific evaluators in a specific field.

The third specific question was about what would happen if there was a conflict between the way the DFSC has been evaluating this person for several years in a row and then the letter says something different. I think there is a concern that the letter could be used as justification to get rid of someone, kind of a “we don’t really want this person but the DFSC rated them acceptable all these years.” So, there’s a concern about what would happen if there is a conflict.

I’d also like to mention that in my department, we’ve actually been talking about whether to require evaluators for a couple of years and our conclusion has been no, that we don’t want to require evaluators. So, I’d just like to throw that out there. It has been, at least in my department, it’s been a topic of conversation. So, I think my constituents would be disappointed if they were required to do this, despite their consideration over the past couple of years that’s resulted in the decision to not require this.

Dr. Trites: I think it’s pretty important that we not specify what peer evaluator means. Senator Horst has given me a great example of Yo-Yo Ma. He doesn’t hold academic rank, but if I’m a cello faculty and I could get Yo-Yo Ma to say I’m great, Whoop. So, someone can be a peer without holding academic rank. That said, I do think this needs to be in local control. Here I’m going to use Milner as an example. They have a very unique situation where many of our tenured faculty members peers would not hold academic rank but would still be able to speak to their scholarship in the field of Library Sciences and Information Sciences. So, I think the most important thing to remember is I use the example of giving 10 names but another school/department, Milner, Mennonite could say, you need to give us 3 names and we will select 2. We’ve used the plural here to imply it must be at least 2 letters that are received, but we have not stipulated how many names must be submitted, how many letters must be solicited. So that should, in my mind, be very much decided at the department/school DFSC/SFSC level. And in past practice, typically it’s only one external letter that will say something different than the annual evaluations and the other letter writers, which is definitely why we use three in Arts and Sciences. That one crazy letter is usually not given as much weight. Certainly, no external letter should ever override years of us telling you you are doing a good job.

Senator Novotny: Just a comment. I come from Mennonite College of Nursing. When I went up for tenure, because my college did not require this, I went ahead anyway and solicited someone to give an external review, although I would have been much more picky about who I was searching for if this was a requirement. And I think it’s doable, but my concern, too, was about if I needed 10 people to understand that kind of research, I don’t know how I could possibly do it.

Dr. Trites: That’s just an Arts and Sciences number that works for Arts and Sciences typically. I do think it’s got to be local control.

Senator Novotny: Thank you. I appreciate that. I think I can only think of two to come up with, maybe three to five. But I don’t know of anybody, this is just through the grapevine, but I don’t know of anybody in my college, other than myself, that did submit some sort of external letter previously. None of them have talked to me about this but I can’t anticipate anybody being exceedingly positive about this; although I think that they would understand the need for it. I think that it would be received but it would take a while for that culture to really start to evolve.

Senator Pancrazio: I just want to make a quick comment and say that I think I was among the first group assistant professors in CAS that had to look for external letters, and we weren’t crazy about it either. Nonetheless, we manage. One of the things my department did when looking for people, we weren’t looking for people that knew us. We were looking for people that knew our work. Because what we wanted was some validation that the work stood for itself. The way that my department worked through that was that they looked at the list of editors of journals of which the faculty member had published and that was probably the only way we could have done it because we have multilanguage department, so there is no one faculty member that would be able to comment on Asian languages or European languages and have merit. So, these things can be worked out. We know it doesn’t sound like fun, looks like one more piece of work, but inevitably people can work through it.

Professor Oresky: I just want t to clarify, when I said 10, I probably should have explained a little bit. In procedures that I’m familiar with, you would have a situation where the faculty member would provide 10 potential letter writers and then the director might choose from among them. So, I think 10 seems a little extreme.

Dr. Trites: In some fields it clearly is. That’s why it has to be local. 10 is just what English does. Let’s not make everybody try to be the English department. But seriously that would have to be determined by the local SFSC/DFSC.

Senator Nahm: I’m coming from the School of Theatre and Dance and I just want to share some of the feedback that I got from my constituents. So, no one who provided feedback was outright opposed to the idea, but there were a lot of questions about procedure. Because within the School of Theatre and Dance there are really as many disciplines as there are faculty members. We have faculty members in acting and design, in directing, whose scholarly and creative activity portfolio will mostly consist of live performance works that experts in the field may not be able to see directly. They might have to rely on images and clips to access that work, which is an incomplete experience of it. So, there was a lot of questions about how we find these evaluators -- what’s the process. I think that overall, it will take a while to get faculty buy in and come up with a procedure that will work for everyone, that will work in our school.

So, the only concern that I have looking at the revised language was about the 2023 date, just because not necessarily in terms of preparing those people going up for tenure and giving them enough time, more so for the SFSC so that it has enough time to talk to the faculty and come up with a procedure that everyone is happy with.

Senator Horst: Members of the URC, is 2024 acceptable?

Dr. Trites: We are all kind of nodding our heads, but I think it would be better if we take it back to the whole URC. It would certainly be within the spirit of what we’ve been discussing. So, as I listen, I’m absolutely like, “what was I thinking?” So, yeah, it’s going to take a lot of schools/departments longer.

Senator Garrahy: I’d just like to go back to what Professor Trites has mentioned in terms of local control. My own school has had this as an option for faculty for years and certainly support that. So, I would ask that consideration return to the word, department and schools *may* require it. I understand why my colleagues in Biology need this. We’ve heard about grants and funding and it’s expected within their field; but I would respectfully request that we leave it within each local school or college to make the decision that best fits their needs. Like Senator Aldeman, my constituents that I specifically reach out to in CAST, and Senator Harpel as well, were asking “Why now? What is the motivation behind this? What purpose is this going to serve?” I did not have a supporting comment and that might be individual to each college, but I would ask that consideration remain at keeping this at a local decision to make what fits the needs of my colleagues across the different colleges and departments.

Senator Horst: I don’t know if this is hearsay or not, but I did hear a tale of somebody who got tenure at Illinois State University and then accepted another position at another university and the tenure didn’t transfer because of the lack of external reviews. So, there is that to consider.

Dr. Trites: Interesting.

Senator Beucher: I’m in the School of Teaching and Learning, and I just wanted to share some comments that I’ve gathered from my constituents. I’ve also passed along the full comments through the Academic Senate to be share with the committee. The pre-tenure faculty that expressed initial concern, expressed appreciation for pushing back the timeline. We have, I think, a polarization within TCH. There are some constituents that do believe that external reviews can create a more equitable review process as we’ve heard your committee express as one of the reasons. There’s also concern about having this conversation in the midst of the pandemic. So, I think that pushing back that timeline is appreciated. However, as we’re talking about going to conferences and networking as an integral part of developing relationships, I don’t think that we are in a position to understand the implications to all the disruptions to business as usual from the pandemic. So, I think that still remains a concern.

And sure, there have been remarks of the impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of faculty, and there is the sense that requiring an external review puts an added level of pressure on our professional work and how we demonstrate our expertise. There’s also concern around—and I know this is something we’re talking about in this conversation—

resource allocation. So, will there be concurrent resources to support the work that needs to be done to have the kinds of relationships that they’ll need to have strong reviews? And there’s also been mention of an impression around what is this shift trying to address? what’s the problem? And wonderings if there are intentions to elevate the status of the University? if that’s coupled with the move to include external reviews as a part of our review process? So, to echo Senator Garrahy’s respectful request to have this be an option, I think having it remain an option would be appreciated by many of the constituents who’ve expressed these concerns.

And also, to address the polarized stances that members in TCH have whether we should or shouldn’t, and perhaps that would allow for the kinds of conversations that I’m sensing folks still need to have at the school level.

Senator Horst: Can the URC elaborate as to why you felt it was important to make this a requirement across the University as opposed to keeping it on the local level?

Dr. Trites: Yes. I think the senator just nailed it in one with a perfect landing of ten. It is about the overall reputation of the University. It is about doing what is the standard in the field. It is a point of the realm for the schools, not only that we aspire to be, but the schools who are our competitors; we are outliers. So, that is not a good look and I mean that in a metaphorical way. Yes, you nailed it. It’s about our reputation.

Senator Cline: There were just two things I wanted to follow up on. Senator Aldeman mentioned something that was brought up by Senator Torry, who isn’t with us today, last time -- this idea of sort of retributive behavior in departments. I think that’s a valid issue. Dr. Trites said no external letters should ever overrule years of positive letters from your department; but it could unless you put it in the bylaws of the structures so that it can’t, right? I think that needs to be a consideration, because we’re hearing it often from faculty as a concern.

The other, I just want to be really clear because I think there’s a vocabulary tension -- external letters don’t always mean the same things. So, Melissa Oresky, when you yourself send something out to a colleague and ask for a letter of support for your tenure package, that’s not external review. Right. It’s not the same, and you weren’t here last meeting when Senator Otto said she tried to do that, and her tenure evaluation was denied the capacity to do it because there’s no structure in the bylaws to do it. So, getting outside letters of support is different than external review. I think we have to be clear about the word that we are using, because I would expect that even if my packet would be going up for external review, that I would also get external letters to support. I would contact people who I have worked for and say hello, friend, right, because you are aware I work here… that’s a different process when you’re asking for both. Whereas many of us now just do the former, which is you reach out to external people. I 100% agree no one should go up and get full professorship without asking people outside their discipline, outside of the university period, and that’s already the case, in most areas. Not always but in some places it is. But I do think that those are separate processes. So, there’s going to be a little delineation of those things.

But I am concerned with this consistent worry about retributive behavior, and I think that’s going to tie a little bit to the third-year review conversation a little bit.

And I would also support again the concern of the TCH faculty is that there needs to be an increase in resources, right. This is what I mean by prepare, Senator Blum. If you do not have consistent resources, as my department we have none, you have to build those relationships with editors, and it’s not so much colleagues but people who can publish and can put them in chapters of their books. So, what I mean by prepare, if you are aware now the new standard being brought to your work ,and you only have three or four years to do that, and your research funding has not increased to help you to accomplish a new level of scrutiny, that’s going to cause some tension with more senior faculty in areas where we don’t have the same resources that others do.

Senator Horst: Did the committee at all consider external letters as opposed to external reviewers?

Dr. Trites: That distinction is lost on me. I understand sort of what an endorsement is, when I ask someone to write on my behalf, I call that an endorsement. But if I as a chair ask someone to write a memorandum, then it’s an external letter of review.

Senator Cline: If you look at the CFSC requirement in the Wonsook Kim of Fine Arts for instance, you will see that there is a requirement for letters of support, right. And they will tell you that some should be internal, and some should be external. But letters of support or letters does not equal review. We’re using that interchangeably in this conversation, and I think that they are not interchangeable. They are very different things. I suggest establishing vocabulary and stick with it so it’s a clear delineation.

Dr. Trites: Thank you for that clarification. I 100% agree with you.

Senator Horst: You could get a letter of support for someone you know, but you would not necessarily know the person who is the external reviewer.

Senator Cline: Right. We all know that when a student asks us for a letter of recommendation and they’re not going to see it, we write it differently. Right. So, an external reviewer is someone who is an anonymous relationship between the chair and the DFSC and the reviewer, not the person being reviewed and then letter writer. That distinction is significant. Am I making sense?

Professor Oresky: It seems to me that there’s also enough room in this policy that you wouldn’t necessarily need to not know the people who are being asked to review.

Senator Cline: No, it’s not that you don’t know them, but it’s that you didn’t invite them and that you’re not involved.

Professor Oresky: Sure. But it’s also conceivable that a college could come up with a procedure by which you choose the pool from which your letter writers are invited. So, you might not know who has been invited from among the pool, but maybe most of them do know you, and you would know that they have a relationship with your work. So, I think that it’s not necessarily, like they shouldn’t have any communication with you; but it seems that there is quite a lot of room in each school or department to determine what that evaluation is, how it’s done, how the letter writers are chose, and what the degree of confidentiality is in the process. There are some things that are dictated by law, but I think if a school or department or college would prefer that the peer evaluators function a little bit more like external support letters, it could design a process that was friendlier to make it… It just seems like there’s so much under local control in this process that it wouldn’t necessarily need to be…

Senator Cline: Right. For the first half you and I, I think, are saying the same thing, just different ways of saying it. But I would challenge that if we leave it up to a point where our department could essentially mimic external letter of recommendation could fill in for external review, then we’re not really creating an external review process. External review is a structured approach that it’s sent out through an anonymous email that you are not involved, as the person being reviewed you cannot communicate with the person that’s reviewing you. You know, if you don’t do it that way, we aren’t really adding anything. I believe in local control and all of those things, but if I understood what you were saying, Melissa, external review would cease to be external review if you leave it so malleable that it can just be like an external letter of support. All I was asking Dr. Trites was that we make sure we’re careful about saying outside letters or external letters and review. We use them differently in different parts of the campus, and I just wanted some clarity there. But I don’t think that the standards, if we’re going to do external review it needs to be external review; but it doesn’t conclude the fact that you might also have external letters of support that you petition for yourself as the person under review, if that makes sense. That’s all I was saying, was to clarify that language. I don’t think we should soften it so much that we in our school are held to a different standard that’s called external review than somebody else. We’re trying to find equity across the campus.

Professor Oresky: I’m not suggesting that it gets watered down so it’s like asking for letters of recommendation, I’m saying exactly what the process is and how that’s handled wouldn’t be just set according to some standard across the university.

Dr. Trites: I hear what you are saying, and it does kind of speak to the concern about retribution, but I think if we take a look at VIII.E.d: “how the evaluators’ letters will be considered and weighted in the promotion review process.” Is going to speak to that exact retribution that you are concerned about? So, the other piece is that I don’t think Professor Oresky is suggesting that she should have a mechanism in her department, even though we are all in the same department, … She’s not saying that in Oceanography they get to write their own letters, but all the oceanographers get to determine that someone who hates me is not on this list. That should help people’s confidence that this is meant to provide external validation of performance, not meant as, “tell us what’s wrong with this person.” Did I speak for you accurately?

Professor Oresky: Yeah. I mean, it’s not like running a gauntlet; it’s like getting vetted.

Dr. Trites: Yeah. Exactly.

Senator Brehm: I just wanted to quickly address the concerns that were raised about what happens if you get a negative external review that goes against perhaps what your DFSC has been saying all; I have experience with that situation. It is the responsibility of the chair and the DFSC to make the case and perhaps address what was called out in a negative letter and provide justification for why you still think this person has a case for tenure and promotion. We’ve not had a problem with that. I think our CFSC recognizes that sometimes there are people who are outliers, and they weren’t exceedingly harsh. I think those things can be easily worked through with a strong DFSC and a strong departmental and college policy with how to deal with those things. So, we haven’t had an issue with that.

Senator Harpel: I’m going to preface with saying, I did have external letters for both tenure and for getting promoted to full, so we are encouraged in our department to have the letters, and I’m one that went ahead and got those letters. So, I do feel that in some cases they can add some merit to someone’s qualifications -- particularly if people in the department do not know about their research area. However, I would say that in terms of my constituents, they are very concerned about this. We have individuals who, one in particular, had a dual appointment between two programs in our department; and the only individual she would have been able to get letters from were previous supervisors. Within our bylaws within our DFSC we are not allowed to have people write our letters who we have previously worked under or published with. So, she would have essentially nobody that was familiar enough with her work in this one area as well as the work in the other area that met the criteria for a letter writer. So, that is some concern for individual.

When Deb asked what the motivation for this was, you stated that it’s related to prestige. I have shared that input with my constituents and, by and large, the response has been “Who are they trying to make us? Who do they want us to be?” We have good researchers in my department. They win awards at the national level. They win awards at the college level. We are well known in our disciplines we don’t need to have more prestige brought to us simply by saying we have external reviewers who review our dosser. We are also very strong teachers, and I think the concern is if we start putting all of this emphasis on who you have to have external reviews, then that is going to cause a lot of anxiety among those who are excellent teachers. They are good researchers as well, but they’re not getting these huge grants, but they’re excellent teachers. Because we have been told in our department, and it’s in the bylaws, that your letter should focus on research. So, I’m just concerned that if we say this is a requirement, it’s going to be at the detriment of individuals who cannot get people who know their discipline enough. It may also lead to the perception that we are trying to just put all of our emphasis on research, when we started out as a normal university, and we take great pride in our teaching within our department.

Dr. Trites: I do think that this is not about teaching. I can’t say strongly enough, as long as our annual evaluations system is weighing, and prioritizing teaching, and that evaluation is clearly internal. We do not need anyone from the outside telling us whether we’re teaching well. Every time I’ve written one of these letters for somebody else, they tell me do not even try to talk about teaching or service; we just want to know about research. And that’s the language we need to be using. We have evolved as a University. I hear frequently from faculty that they feel that their scholarship is underappreciated and under respected. This would be an internal mechanism to help faculty know we are paying attention. It’s not just your teaching, of course we value that. We train more teachers than anyone else in the state, but this is an internal mechanism for us to say “I care about your scholarship. I’m on the DFSC, I want to recognize it, but in a way, because I’m not in your specific self-discipline, I can’t fully appreciate it.” So, it is not meant in any way to diminish teaching. It’s meant simply to help everyone.

Senator Harpel: I guess I’m confused. If this is coming from an external reviewer, that praise that you’re talking about for my research isn’t coming from the DFSC. Do you see what I’m saying? Because my DFSC praises my research every year. I don’t need an external review every year to tell me that. So, I think many of my constituents would say, “Okay, they can’t wrap their head around the fact that this letter can’t hurt me, but yet you have to have it.” Does that make sense?

Dr. Trites: I can get that latter point. I really can. I’m not getting the former point. So many people work in departments where they’re the only person in their field who does what they do. I get praised routinely by my DFSC for the number of publications. I’ll tell them this is a really great journal; this one is one I publish in all the time it wasn’t that hard. They’ll praise me when I say this is really a publication. The only time that my annual evaluation letter speaks specifically to my subdiscipline is when there’s someone from my subdiscipline on the DFSC. That’s fine for annual evals, it really is, but when I’m going up for a promotion, I want to guarantee that someone in my specific subdiscipline has a voice at the table.

Senator Horst: I would just add that sometimes in creative arts it can be radically different fields, like you’re a director and you’re being evaluated by a dancer, or I’m a composer and I’m being evaluated by a euphonium player. So, there is crossover, but the approach to the activity is radically different.

Senator Bonnell: Just a few quick comments. Milner constituents remain concerned, and they do so for the same sentiment that Senator Harpel just mentioned. If scholarship is 10%-15%, what is this letter going to do for me? Why can’t we just trust the DFSC/CFSC within Milner? So, that’s one comment.

Also, they did appreciate the latitude that you’ve written into this. They do really appreciate that. But then, the flip side of that is that then they’re concerned about the latitude and what it could mean. So, you expressed, Dr. Trites, that sentiment which you seemed to articulate, so thank you for that, the idea that you really do seem to mean that there is some latitude for departments.

Dr. Trites: I feel especially strongly about our smallest colleges and Milner. So, I feel like especially Mennonite and Milner—I’m in a giant college—I really feel it’s extremely important for those units esspecially to have control of how this is run.

Senator Bonnell: Thank you. I’m a historian so I think about things like this is what we’re doing on December 8, 2021, but five years from now I hope that sentiment will still remain. People will go back. It won’t be somebody’s memory of, “wait? What happened then?” So, thank you. The last thing I want to say, I wanted to go back to what Senator Cline was saying about the letter distinguishing, I would suggest that under VIII.D that you just mentioned, “letter”, I think, is confusing word. If we really mean review, can’t we change it to be evaluation review, just to make it clear what it is and what it isn’t? Thanks.

Dr. Trites: That’s a very helpful suggestion, thank you.

Senator Horst: Are there any specific wording suggestions, for instance, in E, a, b, c, or d? No? Okay. Are there any specific comments about IX? Again, we’re not doing IX.C it would be IX.D.4 That’s basically the same language, but now, specifically, with 2028 for the consideration for tenure.

Senator Nahm: I have a wording question, and it comes in the paragraph in Article VIII after the a,b,c,d. In the paragraph that begins with, “Departments/Schools shall provide to the evaluators the…” It’s about the written description of the candidate’s efforts and activities. Is this description that the candidate themselves write? Or is it something that the DFSC or CFSC writes and provides?

Dr. Trites: That would need to be specified at the local level whether that is something that the candidate… I was going to presume the candidate writes he first draft for editing by the SFSC/DFSC to make it easier. When I’ve received such documents it’s pretty clear they were usually written by the candidate themselves. That gives the candidate another layer of control of the narrative. But I think if a department or school thought it best for the DFSC or chair to write it, that would be their decisions.

Senator Cline: I just wanted to ask a question about that. Is there any possibility to consider… so the description of the assignment of the faculty and their activities is a major part of that process? Is it possible to consider that the person being evaluated should be in the creation of that? Because some could disagree, right, about how that’s described. I think I’m telling you correctly that a colleague of mine at a different institution that it was her responsibility to write that and hand that in with her list. Because the faculty member who’s being evaluated role in that it has not been described here.

Dr. Trites: Typically, I think the intention of the URC on this one is in response to people who rightly say, “Look, if you send this to somebody I want, and they have no idea I’ve been teaching a 3:3, and I’m still publishing one article a year.” That’s specifically in your response to that. That said, I can see great wisdom in seeing the candidate do the first pass. I’d like to throw it back to y’all. Is that as vague as it is here and clarify it at the local level, or is it best to be specific here? I would defer to your feedback.

Senator Otto: This kind of goes back to the a,b,c,d. And that is doing some work to really spell out what constitutes conflicts of interest on all the sides of this external evaluation

Dr. Trites: Typically, Senator Otto, that again would be handled at the local level. It is commonly understood that your advisor is a pretty worthless thesaurus and cannot be impartial. I’d like to throw this to Senator Brehm who has dealt with that very issue.

Senator Brehm: We are very clear. It can’t be your advisor. It can’t be someone you have directly published with. Again, the external reviewer provides an opportunity to assess the contributions of a faculty works to a larger discipline. So, they don’t necessarily even have to know that person, or have met them at a conference; but rather you’re looking for other people who work in your field who, like others have expressed, we are also very diverse department. So, my DFSC sometimes they don’t even understand my work. Those external reviewers are critical for that. When I reach out to external reviewers, I very clearly articulate that we are a teaching heavy institution. I share what our teaching load is. I basically set the stage for external reviewers so that they understand what our expectations are, what our teaching and service loads are, so I don’t end up with people thinking, “Well you’re not publishing enough” because they have a mindset of an R1. Again, we kind of spelled that out in our policies that, as chair, that is our obligation to make sure that external reviewers understand the correct context under which they are providing the assessment.

Senator Otto: Thank you for that. And I understand that on the side of the reviewers and choosing reviewers; but there are conflicts of interest on the side of the DFSC/SFSC and the chair. So, I think those are the parts that need to be spelled out. Mostly, these specifics about who can be included in your reviewer list are generally spelled out, as you said. But there are other opportunities for conflict of interest, especially for people going up for mandator personnel actions.

Senator Pancrazio: I think we have a formalized copy that the department approved that talked about how we were going to contextualize and explain ourselves. I’ll say at the same time, no one was enthusiastic about it. I think most of the assistant professors thought of it as one more hoop, and if we have any issues as far as someone having a vendetta or retribution or something. I have just as much fear from DFSC members as we do for anybody outside; and in those instances, it might be better to have someone that doesn’t really know us. So, in that sense, it was something we could live through. Did we really get the recognition we aspire to? No, I don’t think we ever do. But that’s kind of the fact of being an undiscovered genius. I saw it as one of those things that was worth it. I’ve never seen an assistant professor very happy, joyous, and enthusiastic about going through anything related to an extremely intense process of having go through tenure and promotion. It’s part of our field. I mean, whatever profession would have you work 12 years and not know if you’re going to be waiting tables or not? But at the same time, it’s something we live through. I would urge that before this committee goes back, I would say to the individual constituents, “wWhat can we do with this to move forward on that?” Because, there are solutions to the issues that people are talking about. And likewise, I’ve been in enough DFSC and CFSC discussions, when you see a letter that goes over, people recognize that. When we see letters that make comments, if we don’t see those in other parts or directives, we are also professional about it. In that sens,e it does help to have people evaluate that don’t know you.

Senator Schmeiser: I just want to double check, I think I know the answer, but when it comes to choosing external evaluators, I’m also in LAN but I’m on the linguistic side. I know in many linguistics departments,typically ,what we’ll do is you turn in the editorial boards where you’ve published. And then you, because we have certain frameworks, so if you’ve heard of Noam Chomsky, for example, if you don’t use his type of framework, and someone reviews your work, it might not end well. So, we often times have the right to block also, not just choose or offer the editorial board, but actually have a certain number of people on that board that we block. I’m assuming that is left up to the department, but I just wanted to make sure.

Dr. Trites: Yes. I think the intention is very much for candidates to create a list where there is no one that is going to blackball them. I have known departments to allow you up to three names of people under no circumstances can those people be asked. But those are at schools where the candidate isn’t allowed to submit, please select from this list.

Senator Blum: If we’re going to do this, I think something that absolutely needs to be added in and it’s come up a couple of times now, is the relationship of the actual evaluation and then between the annual review letters. I really think that needs to be explicit -- some kind of statement that these letters can’t be used to invalidate that process. I don’t have the words right off the top of my head, but something along that line. I think in theory the DFSC can handle that. I think there would be a great deal of comfort amongst assistant professors if there was actual language that guided DFSCs/SFSCs in using it that way.

Dr. Trites: I’ve heard that loud and clear tonight, Senator Blum, and I believe you are right. Just as Senator Pancrazio said, we can find the language to do that, and there’s no reason not to. I think Senator Bonnell is right. We should never ever assume that everybody is going to remember something nice I said in December 8, 2021. So, the more I’ve heard this suggestion, and we all seem to be on the same page about it, I think that’s something we can take back to the URC and work on.

Senator Horst: I wanted to throw out one suggestion quickly, going back to IV.B.1. Currently your proposal was to revise policy received by May 1 from a DFSC/SFSC “shall be considered and either approved or returned with comments by November 1.” The concern was, could we add language that could for instance accommodate the COVID situation we had where there could be flexibility? Could we add the sentence “revised ASPT policies received after May 1 from a DFSC/SFSC will be considered as time and conditions allow.”

Dr. Trites: Oh. You’re on a totally different topic.

Senator Horst: I am. I just want to get it done. Sorry, Roberta, I just wanted to throw out that edit that there could be some flexibility section that we did that it wouldn’t be a hard and fast deadline. That’s a suggestion that came from a valued constituent, and I was wondering if anyone had a reaction to that. That we don’t have a hard and fast deadline, so if we have a situation like we had in COVID, changes could be made to the ASPT language.

Dr. Trites: I think that’s excellent.

Senator Horst: Okay. Great. I have two minutes left. I also want to acknowledge that you submitted a calendar schedule for different deadlines for a response to annual responses for full professors, and that was in your materials at the end. We never got to that discussion. It was in your summary under “general suggestions questions.” You had a proposal that in Appendix I after C, that you would have a different schedule for calendar for performance evaluation review for tenured faculty only, and you had a different schedule of dates. For instance, instead of February 1 you had February 15, instead of February 15 you had February 25. It gave a little but more flexibility for performance evaluation review for tenured faculty. That was in our packet. Does anyone have any reaction to that? x

Senator Nahm: It’s not in reaction to your comment, it’s actually in response to the question that you had asked earlier about whether it’s preferable to leave the language about the description vague or to specify. I would recommend adding a bullet point to the a,b,c,d list requiring DFSCs to come up with specific policies and procedure for how to write that description, since it’s a new piece of information that we’ll be providing to the external evaluator that’s not like the mission statement and ASPT documents.

Dr. Trites: Thank you.

Senator Horst: Going back to the calendar, did anybody have any reaction to having a different calendar for tenured faculty that would give more time to the DFSCs/SFSCs?

Senator Bonnell: That’s a long time ago, but I happen to be on URC and was part of the subcommittee that looked at that, so I read that, and I have a response. One of the big concerns for that was the idea that in this world if we get increment raises, if there’s a different timeline for other people as that review is not taking place simultaneous, that can be a real conflict. That was just one concern with an adjusted timeline.

Senator Horst: So, is the URC putting forward this additional calendar?

Dr. Trites: We intend to. But it was only a two-week difference which we really hope would give DFSCs more time to focus on pre-tenure people and perhaps we can extend out; but it’s been a very, very, very long time since we knew about salary incrementation processes in April or May.

Senator Bonnell: When you think about as people are being reviewed by different criteria, there will be one whole set of people who will be reviewed under one set, even if it’s two week later, that other subset wouldn’t be a holistic review. I know you’re not reviewing yourself against one another; but still, it just seems like it would create some complication.

Dr. Trites: I follow what you’re saying.

Senator Horst: I’m just going to say thank you to everyone who stayed late many evenings. The Faculty Caucus Executive Committee is summarizing all of our discussions and creating a letter. I’ll send that to chair Buckley by Monday or Tuesday of next week, and we look forward to receiving your reply. We’ve done some edits to the language and we’re also just summarizing the comments. I’ll get that to you as expeditiously as possible.

***Adjournment***

Motion by Senator Pancrazio, seconded by Senator Cline, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Attendance:**

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| --- | --- |
|  | Caucus |
| Name | Attendance |
| Aldeman, Matt (rep Qaddour, Jihad) | 1 |
| Avogo, Winfred - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Beucher, Becky | 1 |
| Blum, Craig | 1 |
| Bonnell, Angela | 1 |
| Cline, Lea | 1 |
| Garrahy, Deb | 1 |
| Harpel, Tammy | 1 |
| Hollywood, Mary | 1 |
| Horst, Martha | 1 |
| Lahiri, Somnath - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Marx, David - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Meyers, Adena | 1 |
| Midha, Vishal - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Nahm, Kee-Yoon | 1 |
| Nichols, Wade | 1 |
| Nikolaou, Dimitrios | 1 |
| Novotny, Nancy | 1 |
| Otto, Stacy - VIRTUAL | 1 |
| Pancrazio, Jim | 1 |
| Peters, Steve | 1 |
| Samhan, Bahae - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Schmeiser, Benjamin | 1 |
| Seeman, Scott - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Smudde, Pete - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Stewart, Todd | 1 |
| Torry, Mike - EXCUSED | 0 |
| Valentin, Rick | 1 |
| Vogel, Laura | 1 |
| Brehm, Joan (chair rep) | 1 |
| Vacant - 1 CAS SS Faculty | 0 |
| Vacant - 1 Faculty Associate | 0 |
| **QUORUM IS 17** | 21 |
| (Provost Tarhule - NV) |  |