

Faculty Caucus Minutes
Wednesday, March 26, 2008
(Approved)

Call to Order

Senate Chairperson Dan Holland called the meeting to order.

Approval of Faculty Caucus Minutes of February 6, 2008

Motion: By Senator Borg, seconded by Senator Alferink, to approve the Faculty Caucus Minutes of February 6, 2008. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Item:

03.19.08.02 ASPT Proposed Revisions: Promotion to Professor in Fourth Year as Associate Professor (Rodger Singley, University Review Committee Chairperson)

Rodger Singley, University Review Committee Chairperson: If you will look at the dates on the document, you will note that this actually started almost a year ago when I was not the chair of URC, but I can tell you a little about the process. Our concern was that we felt that the intent of the ASPT process was that someone needed to be an Associate Professor at this university for at least four years before coming up for Full Professor. The wording, as it was in the ASPT document, was vague, so what I believe was approved by the Faculty Caucus at that meeting was to add the phrase, “as Associate Professor”, making that perfectly clear.

At that point, a concern was raised as to some additional wording perhaps being problematic. Based upon the feedback that Mike Plantholt, who was chair at that time, brought back from the Faculty Caucus, we added two additional sentences to that paragraph that begins with “Ordinarily an Associate Professor must have served...” (in section VIII.E.3.b):

“Similarly, review for promotion to Professor may occur in the fourth year of service as Associate Professor at Illinois State University. Promotion to Professor may take effect the following year.”

I believe that the major reason for adding this was to clarify when someone may go up for Associate Professor early at ISU, which was fairly common. Theoretically, I guess it could even take care of the situation when someone went up for Associate Professor later. I know that, in years past, it was not that uncommon for someone to be tenured perhaps at the standard time and then go up for an Associate a year or two later.

I don’t believe that was considered a huge issue, but it was an issue that needed some clarification. This was the wording that we came up with in the URC to clarify that and to try to address any lingering questions. I will be happy to try to answer anyone’s questions, but again, I must admit that I am somewhat handicapped by the fact that I was not here as chair for the original discussion.

Motion: Senator Cutbirth, seconded by Senator Stewart, to approve the revision to the ASPT policy.

Senator Ellerton: This refers back to the earlier discussion in the Faculty Caucus when this came up before. One of the other concerns was that there certainly are instances when an individual comes to Illinois State and accepts an Associate Professor position, but actually has much more experience than that acceptance would suggest. Accordingly, that individual is able to present for promotion before the four years. I

understand that the “Ordinarily” in the beginning of that paragraph would cover that. However, my concern would be that the “Similarly, review for promotion” may occur in the fourth year in the beginning of the underlined section seems to contradict that. I wonder whether a possible way around that would be to have the wording, “Review for promotion to Professor would normally occur in”

Senator Holland: That would be a Friendly Amendment that has to be agreed to by the person who made the motion and by the seconder.

Senators Cutbirth and Stewart, as well as Professor Singley, agreed to the following Friendly Amendment:

“Similarly, R Review for promotion to Professor ~~may~~ would normally occur in the fourth year of service as Associate Professor at Illinois State University. Promotion to Professor may take effect the following year.”

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Senator Wang: I have a question about this additional sentence. Is it to basically emphasize the scenario in which the Associate Professor’s experience is mainly at Illinois State University?

Professor Singley: Correct.

Senator Wang: So, it is to clarify the previous statement, which is a more general one? In this one, we are trying to make more specific, ‘at Illinois State University’?

Professor Singley: Yes. I am afraid that this is typical of what often happens when we try to modify the ASPT document. When we try to clarify one thing, we open up additional problems. It started out as a fairly simply statement.

Senator Holland: You are trying to set up what is going to be an ordinary procedure, but you do want to leave the option open for someone who, for example, gets a Nobel Prize to be promoted.

Senator Borg: I would support the change that is made here and would like an opinion from the Acting Provost about whether or not this would cause any difficulties in that area of the promotion process. Can you envision this wording providing obstacles for the Provost’s Office? Does this provide both the evidence for the normal and also allow for the extraordinary?

Provost Murphy: I think the modification clarifies. I don’t think the modification, as it comes from URC, changes what is really in practice. A lot of times, the issues that we run into are those dates and ‘when does it take effect?’ That’s what I see the original doing. The “would normally” I don’t think poses a problem. I think, with very little exception, our CFSCs and our DFSCs are diligent in what they are doing and what they are submitting, because it represents the quality of all of the faculty within the department. I see very few exceptions in which our DFSCs and CFSCs are not giving due diligence to quality. I am going to say that with a one-time experience in reviewing promotion and tenure files, because that has not been something that I have done in any other job that I have held in the Provost’s Office.

The Faculty Caucus unanimously approved the proposed revision, as amended:

“Review for promotion to Professor would normally occur in the fourth year of service as Associate Professor at Illinois State University. Promotion to Professor may take effect the following year.”

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Information Item:**03.19.08.01*****ASPT Proposed Revisions: Additional Candidate Materials and Confidentiality
(Rodger Singley, University Review Committee Chairperson)***

Professor Singley: I will provide a little background on this. I have already received some suggested wording changes via e-mail, so certainly we are very open to modifications on this. The impetus for these changes actually started with the former Provost and with some issues coming from the FRC on previous appeals. We have tried to do three major things within these multiple revisions. One concerns faculty members keeping their files up to date. This is probably the most problematic wording and where we would love to hear additional suggestions.

We want to make it clear to faculty that they have the right to continually update their files. If something changes of a significant nature just prior to the review, even though the file has been in for perhaps three weeks, they certainly have the right to do that. We wanted to reinforce that in the process. The obligation is sort of a sticking point. What we would like to convey is that it is up to the faculty member. If they decide that they do not need to update their file, if they feel confident that it is of sufficient value that the decision will be positive, they don't have to. However, it is their fault, and not that of the committee doing the evaluation, if the outcome is not positive.

There was consideration of the obligation to update the file. The problem becomes then that what if something is considered to be significant by the committee, but not by the faculty member. Do we then say that the faculty member did not live up to their obligation to update their file? We don't want to drive the faculty members, chairs, DFSCs, etc. crazy by constantly updating with page changes or anything such of that. We wanted to clarify that, in rare cases, it is possible that something will occur after the DFSC decision, but prior to the CFSC decision, that needs to be considered by the CFSC. Obviously, if someone going up for promotion or tenure receives acceptance of a contribution to a major journal between the time periods of the DFSC and CFSC reviews, it probably should be entered into the file in most cases. We wanted to clarify both to the faculty and to the evaluation committees that that is acceptable.

Also, a concern expressed to the committee, and one we attempted to deal with to some extent, was the concern that some faculty members are trying to add materials that are not significant, such as letters to the editor or outside community groups' support materials from people who typically would not have knowledge of that faculty member's work or have any bearing on the process. That concern was expressed to the URC by a number of people. The current opinion of the URC is that we don't wish to restrict faculty members up front. The decision of what is and what is not significant can be made by the DFSC, CFSC, the Provost and the President at the time they receive the materials.

The final issue within these proposed revisions is sort of a statement concerning the fact that we realize that faculty members often do, and probably should, consult a senior mentor or advisor for advice on these processes. Sometimes, they may choose to consult one outside of the university. If they do so, we want the faculty members to make it clear that there is confidentiality involved in the process and to be somewhat cautious in choosing who they wish to involve in any sort of decision process. In my time on the URC, this has probably not been the most important thing, but it is the most widely encompassing issue. It deals with a lot of materials and a lot of thoughts. I am glad that this is simply an Information Item at this point, because it needs a lot more discussion. I would be very interested in hearing from you tonight or via e-mail exchange.

Senator Borg: Will we be considering these proposed revisions as a package or would it be better for us to deal with each of these changes individually?

Professor Singley: I would hope that you would want to deal with them individually.

Senator Borg: We have in the first page of the document an underlined, “a. Additions to Applicants’ Files,” with a number of changes there. On the second page, which is Section V.C.4., Page 20, we have something similar. Are those essentially the same statements, but just in two different places in the document or are they significantly different from each other?

Senator Holland: One of them is DFSC and one of them is CFSC.

Professor Singley: Correct, so basically the ASPT document is written such that we have these parallel sections for each. I guess it would be possible to condense the ASPT document, since that does fit together, but we chose to state it separately.

Senator Borg: No, I am just trying to get information so that we are clear. They do, essentially, the same thing, but at two different levels. Is that correct?

Professor Singley: Correct.

Senator Borg: At the bottom of page 2, Section XIII.E.3, I don’t quite understand what this is about. Is this what you were talking about when you talked about the letters to the editor, etc?

Professor Singley: Yes, the sort of compromise position within the URC was to provide some guidance as to what is probably significant material to present, but to not absolutely restrict.

Senator Borg: I am a little concerned about this because different disciplines do allow considerably different kinds of materials and I am wondering if we are trying to over protect things by adding this statement.

Professor Singley: Speaking on behalf of myself, and not the URC, I think I share similar concerns.

Senator Borg: We have seen in our discussions, when trying to remedy something, that we often come up with something that may be more problematic. I have to look at this a lot longer and think about it in context, but this is the one paragraph that I am leery about. This is not criticizing the URC, but I am encouraging the members of the caucus to think about this. The job of the Faculty Caucus is not to endorse, necessarily. If this is a serious problem for them, they need to tell us, but we need to make the decision about whether this is appropriate or not.

Senator Kalter: Senator Borg, could you clarify what it is that you are concerned about? What I am looking at is, for example, the word “publication” instead of “research”. This is in Section XIII.E.3., Page 45 (on page two of the proposed revisions). What I heard you say is that there are many different criteria in many different departments. I can imagine that there might be issues where something other than publication is going to count for research.

Senator Borg: You note that this is being added to something that already says, “The FRC in promotion and tenure cases must receive from the faculty member written information supporting the request for an appeal.” Later, it says, “This information shall also be made available to the DFSC/SFSC.” I am not sure if this additional explanatory paragraph is necessary. And, yes, something regarding publication, teaching or service does seem to limit it to something that is in print.

Senator Stewart: Something like research or creative production instead of just publication.

Senator Borg: I am going to suggest that we turn this particular paragraph down when we get to it.

Senator Holland: I am not sure that it is really necessary. I know that there have been cases when people have been inundated with completely irrelevant information and they are trying to avoid that.

Senator Borg: I think it's a faculty member's right to include irrelevant material. I would hesitate in preventing someone from doing so.

Professor Singley: In fairness to the person that suggested this, their point was that, apparently, in one or more cases, the individual may have actually damaged their own case by submitting materials they shouldn't have. Well, it is really up to their chair, their mentor, themselves, etc.

Senator Borg: Yes, and that's why I think the statement on mentoring is probably a good thing to include because it is a positive reminder.

Senator Wang: I am have a question about the insertion at the bottom of page 2 (Section XIII.E.3., Page 45). What is the justification of the URC using the word "publication" rather than "research"?

Professor Singley: There really isn't one; I think that that wording was not a key concern. I think it is due to the makeup of the current URC that most of us think, in terms of research, of publications. There was no intent to restrict any form of research from that. I think Senator Borg's more important point is that there can certainly be pertinent information that goes far beyond any sort of narrow definition such as this.

Senator Blaney: The term, "creative activity", may also come into play, as it is referenced in the buff book. I have a question about the part on confidentiality. You begin that section on page 3, (entitled, Item II: Clarification to Confidentiality, Section I.D., Page 7 and continuing), "To the degree that applicants may wish to consult with mentors or advisors". I know that it is implied that the mentors involved here will be those voluntarily chosen by the applicants, but there may be academic units that have assigned mentors. I am wondering if it might be useful to add language that says, "by the applicant" or whomever. Also, add to, "and reminded of the expectation of confidentiality", who they will be reminded by. I guess what I am saying is that we ought not to assume that any mentor would, necessarily, have been chosen by the applicant.

Senator Borg: I would remind people that we are altering the rules that apply to the entire university. The colleges may choose to provide certain further restrictions as long as they don't violate these. Certainly, departments and schools can have their own selection processes, so you are entirely right that it may be one department's process to assign mentors to junior faculty members, but it strikes me that, at that point, the responsibility for the reminding of confidentiality becomes a part of the department's obligation, not necessarily the faculty member's.

Senator Blaney: Not the applicant's?

Senator Borg: These are the overarching rules that may include, but don't preclude, other suggestions.

Professor Singley: Are we, by chance, going to prevent someone in any way from choosing their own mentor, even if the department does assign one?

Senator Borg: That's a good question; I don't really have an answer for you on that. Maybe we can discuss it by e-mail. Your point is very well taken; I think we need to make sure that we are not preventing those possibilities from happening.

Senator Stewart: In the wording of this, I don't see that it says that a school or unit is choosing a mentor. It just says that you may wish to consult with a mentor, so it's pretty wide open.

Professor Singley: My greater concern would be that if someone within in a college were assigned a mentor and that this is the only mentor you may consult.

Senator Alferink: I am asking for clarification under 4.a., section 4 (page one of the proposed revisions). To me, the second sentence, "Applicants have the right, even the obligation, to ensure that files are as up to date as is possible." doesn't seem follow from the first sentence. So, when it's inserted there, it seems out place. The first sentence talks about materials that may be requested by the CFSC. Then it talks about the applicant's right. Wouldn't the right or obligation be to provide files, rather than to ensure that the files are complete? I don't see how it follows, because those two things seem to be talking about something very different at the point that it is inserted.

Professor Singley: The point that we making with this is that the CFSC has the right to request materials, but the faculty member also has the right to add materials of their own desire. So you may know of something unknown to the DFSC or CFSC that you wish to insert. With the previous wording, it seemed that most of the right sat with the evaluating committee to request materials, but it wasn't quite so clear that the person being evaluated also has a right to add additional materials as they feel necessary.

Senator Alferink: Wouldn't that preclude the CFSC right? Wouldn't it be better to have that as the opening sentence rather than as the second one? The third sentence follows again in terms on what the CFSC does, so it confuses me just in terms of the order of the sentences.

Senator Borg: I see your point, Senator Alferink. I am troubled that that would be the initial sentence in talking about the CFSC, but it is a parenthetical statement, rather than one that follows logically. Perhaps, it should be placed just before the final underlined sentence in that paragraph. You complete all of the information having to do with the CFSC, and then you remind the applicants that they have the right, even the obligation, to do this. You would then continue on with the underlined addition, "Examples of such information include, but are not limited to...", which is the final underlined sentence on page one of the proposed revisions. Of course, then my previous objection about even keeping that particular addition becomes operable.

Senator Kalter: I would further suggest that it be in a separate paragraph. I have already e-mailed Professor Singley, but not everyone, about my problem with the language, "right, even the obligation". One of the things of the things that I would also suggest is that we need to determine the institution's obligation and the applicant's obligation. In the wording that I sent to you, I was basically trying to point out that the institution is not obliged to tenure or promote someone if it does not get a complete file. So if there is something that the committees or the Provost have not seen that would have tipped the scales, it is not the obligation of the CFSC, DFSC, Provost's Office or the President to know about that unless the applicant includes it. So I would recommend trying to tease out what you mean by a right and obligation and try to separate those.

Senator Borg: Yes, but in this case, the right and the obligation refer to the candidate, not to the CFSC.

Senator Kalter: That's my problem with it.

Senator Alferink: The right and the obligation are conflated and actually they should be separated because they are completely different points. I think that the separate paragraph is something that I like.

Senator Borg: I think the separate paragraph sounds very good.

Senator Holland: Then you can expand it out a bit more at that point.

Senator Borg: This is the information stage. Given the number of recommendations and that we are still unclear about what we want, I would recommend that the next time it comes to us that it not be an Action Item, but rather come again as an Information Item to give us an opportunity to think about the language and to have someone create a modified structure of the language in light of the discussion.

Adjournment

Motion: By Senator Borg, seconded by Senator Stewart, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.