

4-22-2010

Minutes, Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee Meeting, Thursday, April 22, 2010

Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee

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Recommended Citation

Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee, "Minutes, Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee Meeting, Thursday, April 22, 2010" (2010). *Professional Standards Committee Minutes*. Paper 71.
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Professional Standard Committee—Minutes
April 22, 2010, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Bush 105

The meeting was convened at 4pm by Claire Strom. Faculty members present were Joshua Almond, Erich Blosssey, Emily Russell, and Anca Voicu.

- 1) Announcements—EC endorsed our proposal for feedback to administrators. The faculty will be informed of the policy, but will not vote. The next meeting of the PSC will be 3pm on April 28, immediately after the final faculty meeting. New members for 2010-2012 will be voted on at that meeting; current candidates for PSC are Dorothy Mays and Eric Smaw.
- 2) Old Business
 - a. FEC bylaw changes—T. Moore submitted the revised language for proposed FEC bylaw changes (see attached). J. Almond recommended changing the language to “whenever possible” rather than “must” so that FEC remains functional in years that it’s impossible to find enough members to serve on FEC. We agreed on the change. We also approved the bylaw changes to dates, the confidentiality policy, and departmental criteria for tenure and promotion. The proposed changes will go to EC and appear on the agenda for the fall.
 - b. Changes to the grant process (Russell)—C. Strom reminded us that we left off last week in discussion of whether or not we can require applications to look for outside funding; we ended that discussion by arguing that we should instead emphasize outcomes in future assessments given the uneven availability of external grants across fields. E. Russell suggested that we might accomplish this goal by amending the list of priority funding to privilege applications demonstrating successful outcomes from previous grants. J. Almond suggests that the department chair could address the question of allowable expenses that might be specific to fields. E. Russell added that currently the document suggests letters of support from the department chair; we might beef that up and add language about looking at the budget. C. Strom said that as this process gets more competitive, more guidance is appropriate at the front end. She added that the chair can also reflect on the applicant’s past achievements. E. Russell suggested that there could be a lead time for applications where grants could be returned to people for additional information if members of the committee find it incomplete; this change would allow the committee to more aggressively uphold standards while also addressing issues of culture shift so that we wouldn’t just deny qualified people. C. Strom added that the committee could split up applications for the next few years, review for completeness, return to applicants and give them one week to revise. E. Russell suggested that “complete” should be understood as holistically as possible—it should include detailed budgets, clear statement of expected outcome, past success. We then turned to the question of whether the committee should offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants. E. Russell suggested that we might provide feedback with respect to procedural

decisions, but not decisions about quality—e.g. expenses that were not allowed. E. Blossey offered that anonymous reviews are the standard in his field; we're a learning institution and he would lean toward offering feedback. J. Almond commented on the higher qualifications of people within a discipline able to assess quality. Given the diversity of our governing body, those choices may be more difficult. C. Strom suggested the dean's office might send two letters, one saying "not funded because in a limited pool, other proposals were more meritorious," with a second letter reading "funding was cut in this place or another because we deemed that use of funds inappropriate." A. Voicu suggested that people would resent and query the definition of meritorious. J. Almond added that the preliminary review period should address procedural issues, these two letters might not be necessary. E. Russell wondered, if we're giving them feedback initially and are giving them time to address it, the letters might not be necessary. C. Strom suggested that we proceed with the preliminary review and revisit issue of feedback later. J. Almond wondered if divisional subcommittees might be appropriate for grant review. C. Strom said that we're just trying to have complete applications for now. E. Russell added that there's value in an interdisciplinary funding committee, citing the important ability to articulate the value of your work to any academic audience. E. Blossey argued for a balance between speaking to a specialist and non-specialist audience. J. Almond added that we currently use field-specific perspective from individual members of the committee, but that there could be an initial review/ranking by a disciplinary committee. We agreed to revise the memo with our current recommendations (see attached) and to revisit issues of discipline and feedback at a later date.

C. Strom adjourned the meeting at 4:55.
Respectfully submitted by Emily Russell.

Attachments (2)

VIII C 2

Section 2. Comprehensive Mid-Course Evaluation

Prior to the tenure review, each candidate for tenure and promotion will receive one comprehensive mid-course evaluation. This evaluation procedure follows the description given in Part D., sections 1-6 for a tenure/promotion evaluation except for the timing and the absence of a recommendation for tenure or promotion. Normally, the comprehensive mid-course evaluation will take place in the spring of the candidate's third year, but no later than two years before the evaluation for tenure is to take place. The Candidate Evaluation Committee, the appropriate Dean, and the Faculty Evaluation Committee will each prepare a written report detailing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the candidate, including specific comments regarding directions the candidate might pursue to strengthen his or her case for tenure or promotion.

All materials designated for review for the purpose of mid course evaluations must be submitted to the Dean of the Faculty and to the FEC on or before December 20 of the year immediately preceding that term or at such other time as shall be designated by the CEC and the FEC in cases where the mid course review, because of special circumstances, shall be held at an earlier time. The CEC letter must be submitted before December 20. FEC must submit its recommendations to the Dean of the Faculty, the CEC, and the candidate by May 1.

A candidate for promotion to Professor has the right to make a written request to the relevant department head and Dean for a comprehensive mid-course evaluation. The subsequent evaluation for promotion can take place no earlier than two years after the mid-course evaluation. In this case, the procedures for the comprehensive mid-course evaluation for tenure will be followed.

Section 6. Faculty Evaluation Committee Structure and Evaluation

The Faculty Evaluation Committee consists of five tenured faculty members each with the rank of Professor serving staggered terms of three years, and one alternate (serving a term of one year), to serve when a regular member is excused from an evaluation. These faculty members are appointed by the Executive Committee, with some consideration given to academic diversity, and ratified by the faculty. Members of the Faculty Evaluation Committee receive one course-released time every year they serve on the committee.

When the number of candidates that the Faculty Evaluation Committee must consider for tenure, promotion, or mid-course evaluation exceeds three times the number of members of the committee, whenever possible the size of the FEC will be increased to ensure that the number of candidates being considered is less than or equal to three times the number of members. Additional members of the FEC will be selected and ratified in the normal manner, preferably at the same time as the other members, will be fully qualified under the guidelines of this section, and will be full members of the FEC for the year of service.

Access to Information. The Faculty Evaluation Committee has access to the candidate's file and all other materials considered at other stages of the evaluation process, and can request additional information from the Dean. It is always appropriate for the Faculty Evaluation Committee to introduce additional information that might not have been included by the Candidate Evaluation Committee or the appropriate Dean. The Faculty Evaluation Committee also has the authority to call in anyone it needs for consultation, especially where there is disagreement between parties at different stages of the evaluation process.

Review by the Faculty Evaluation Committee. The Faculty Evaluation Committee conducts its own evaluation of each candidate for tenure or promotion. The evaluation will be based on the following sources: the written report and recommendation by the Department Evaluation Committee, the department's approved criteria for tenure or promotion or, in the absence of approved criteria, specifications of how College criteria for tenure and promotion are defined, measured, and applied, the assessment of external evaluators (when requested by the candidate), the report and recommendation of the appropriate Dean, the candidate's professional assessment statement, an interview with the candidate, and any other material or information that the Committee has obtained in the exercise of its duties. The Committee may also consult with the Candidate Evaluation Committee, the appropriate Dean, or any other member of the community.

Meetings of the Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) must be confidential, regardless of subject matter under consideration, and may be attended only by the duly appointed members of the FEC. Provided, however, candidates for tenure, promotion, and mid course reviews shall attend meetings in which said candidates are scheduled for FEC interviews or at such other times at the request of the candidate or FEC. Other persons, may at the invitation of the FEC and who are otherwise permitted to be consulted by the FEC in these by laws, may attend meetings of the FEC to which they are invited, including, but not limited to the Chair of the Candidate

Evaluation Committee (CEC), administrators of the college and outside consultants. This by law supersedes all other by laws or faculty handbook rules which may be contrary.

The Faculty Evaluation Committee cannot challenge substantive requirements of a department for tenure or promotion that has approved criteria. The Faculty Evaluation Committee will require the evaluation from the Candidate Evaluation Committee to adhere to its approved criteria, both procedural and substantive.

VIII B 2

Section 2. Departmental Criteria

Each department, with the concurrence of the Faculty Evaluation Committee, shall determine how the above criteria shall be defined and applied for faculty evaluations in particular academic disciplines, providing to the FEC explicit standards for teaching, scholarship, and service for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor and Professor, including standards specific to the discipline. The department shall provide a rationale in support of their standards. **The respective Chairs of all of the departments of the College of Arts and Sciences have executed a document dated August, 2009 in which they have acknowledged the next immediate academic year in which their respective department is required to review and submit its Criteria for Tenure and Promotion to the Dean of the Faculty and the FEC. The dates provided in that document must govern. Thereafter the department Chairs of each respective department of the College of Arts and Sciences must review and submit its criteria for Tenure and Promotion every five years, or prior to that time at the discretion of the departments.** The department must reevaluate and resubmit these criteria to the FEC every five years, or earlier if the criteria have been revised. Any department with a candidate for tenure will use the set of criteria in effect at the time of the candidate's hiring, unless the candidate chooses to use the most recent criteria at the time they take effect. In all other cases, the set of criteria in effect three years prior to the candidate's evaluation will be used, unless the candidate chooses to use the most recent criteria at the time they take effect.

Memorandum

To: Dean Laurie Joyner

CC: Joshua Almond, Erich Blossey, Marc Fetscherin, Billy Kennedy, Karla Knight, Thom Moore, Emily Russell, Claire Strom, Anca Voicu

From: Professional Standards Committee

Date: April 5, 2010

During our review of the professional development grants (including Critchfield and Ashforth Research, Individual Development, Course Development, and Cornell Research Grants), the committee noted several elements of the program guidelines and administration that might be usefully revised. Below, please find a list of our concerns with suggestions for possible improvements.

- 1) The grant proposal form only asks applicants to list dates of previous awards. We suggest that this section be revised to include the phrase: "Please briefly describe the outcome of previously funded projects." In assessing current proposals, particularly from perennial applicants, it would be helpful to know what had been achieved from previous funding.
- 2) In order to demonstrate the value the committee places on demonstrated achievement from previous funding, we recommend adding the following phrasing to section E under "Eligibility": "Proposals that demonstrate successful outcomes from previous proposals."
- 3) The application currently asks for a "departmental approval statement" for proposals that involve new courses, or require space or support personnel. We suggest a wider use of statements of support from department chairs, especially in addressing budgetary requirements specific to work within a field and in describing the value of the proposed work.
- 4) In reviewing proposed budgets, we often got the sense that figures were reverse engineered to match a specific total amount. Given that the committee often chooses to cut individual items in a budget—in order to spread funding across several worthy proposals or because the requested expenditure is not allowed—it would be very useful to have an accurate accounting of total expected expenses and other sources of revenue. The current instructions ask: "Please review Permitted Expenditures section and provide as much detail as possible. Be specific about what costs will be incurred for travel, telephone, staff support, photocopying, etc. This budget will be for one year only." We suggest the addition of the following sentence: "Your proposed budget should reflect your actual anticipated permitted expenditures for the project, even if this figure exceeds the allowed maximum of \$5000. Please also reflect other sources of revenue." Similarly, in the initial paragraph of section E under "Eligibility," we suggest adding the following lines: "In order to successfully allocate partial funding, the committee must have a complete picture of the total expected budget. Please give a detailed accounting of allowed expenditures, even if this projected total exceeds the funding maximum."
- 5) We found that the decade-old per diem of \$100 rarely matched the expected costs of travel. We suggest that applicants provide a good faith estimate of their actual proposed expenses (those uncertain of costs in their proposed locale could be directed to consult the US Department of State's annual suggested per diem rates). Then, since

reimbursement will not exceed the initial amount awarded for the grant, awardees should submit receipts following the same process used for all other faculty travel.

- 6) In the current distribution of funding pools, proposals for course development grants involving domestic travel slip through the cracks. Current per diem limits on lodging and transportation may limit faculty members' ability to match these scouting trips to the expected itinerary to be taken with students. Proposals 2 and 3 above would also successfully address this problem.
- 7) To further address concerns over a changing culture, we recommend offering a preliminary review period for grants submitted over the next three years. Proposals would be submitted in the standard way to the dean's office and reviewed for completion of FSAR, submission of progress reports, etc. Those not meeting the requirements for submission would be excluded from consideration. Then, the remaining proposals would be divided among members of PSC for a more holistic review, checking in particular to be sure the applicant has submitted a thorough budget. Incomplete proposals will be returned to the applicant for revision and must be resubmitted in one week. This preliminary review is not intended to address issues of merit, but to ease the college's transition to new standards and practices in grant review.
- 8) We suggest that a cover e-mail be included with the call for next year's proposals detailing any of the accepted above changes and reminding faculty of the competitive nature of these grants. While we believe we have been enforcing both the rule and spirit of these programs in our decisions this year, we also recognize that our awards may have strayed from the past culture of funding at Rollins. We want to be mindful of the growing pains that can result from apparent deviations from institutional practice, even where those decisions are in line with written policies.