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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee Meeting, Thursday, October 8, 2009

Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee

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Professional Standards Committee
Minutes from October 8, 2009
4:00 p.m. Bush 105

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 15 in Bush 105.

The meeting was convened at 4:10 p.m. in Bush 105 by Thomas Moore. Other faculty members present were Josh Almond, Erich Blossey, Mark Fetscherin, and Emily Russell. Dean Laurie Joyner was present.

1) Old Business

- a. Evaluation of Provost—we reviewed and approved the memo (attached) detailing PSC recommendations to President Duncan on evaluation of the Provost.
- b. Evaluation of Teaching—E. Blossey notes that Rollins has been behind the curve in the way we evaluate faculty, especially in the continued emphasis on student evaluations. He led us through his (attached) handout on concerns regarding the use of student evaluations in faculty development and review. E. Russell observed that practices seem to vary widely across departments. E. Blossey attributes this variety to not having strong enough department chairs, and suggests that chairs could be a governance committee modeled, for example, after the curriculum committee. T. Moore agreed that the role of department chairs could be strengthened and suggested the College might grant authority, not just responsibility, to department chairs and division heads. L. Joyner described an alternate model of division chairs, not department chairs. L. Joyner then addressed specific elements in Blossey's handout:
 - 1) agreeing that we don't have a good way to assess excellence in teaching; 2) asserting that the assumption of FSC was that all faculty met expectations for teaching, but where faculty were close calls narrative comments were read, complaints to dean's office were accounted for, and GPAs in classes were included in considerations; 3) emphasizing the centrality of how to use evaluations to support faculty development and improvement in teaching. L. Joyner also put pressure on the point that "students don't know the following" regarding teaching and noted a parallel objection from administrators to faculty feedback. E. Blossey responded that where students lack information about teaching, colleagues can address that gap. T. Moore noted that we acknowledge there are problems with our current system, but asked at what level do we address it: 1) change administrative structure of the college; 2) change process thoroughly; or 3) tweak the current process? M. Fetscherin argued that while there are certain drawbacks to the current CIE model, there might be more effective ways to use the data, especially in questions regarding the correlation between GPA and evaluation scores and the number of self-assessed hours students spend on class. Regarding solutions, M. Fetscherin highlighted the potential value of surveying alumni. J. Almond asked: if such surveys involve an assumption that alumni perspective will change, if it doesn't, are we just entrenching an already flawed system? M. Fetscherin noted the value of alumni response as an additional data point. L. Joyner wondered what this alumni response instrument might look like and whether the data collection would privilege behaviors not intended to be measured by the review committee, e.g. social networking between faculty and former students. Looking ahead to further solutions, E. Blossey notes that we can

enforce internal peer review more thoroughly than we currently do. J. Almond suggests that we make substantive changes to the teaching evaluation process while also addressing long-term, systemic issues like the role of department chairs or division heads. Almond prefers the option of retaining department chairs, but enforcing a strengthening of their roles. E. Blosssey argues that department chairs are necessary to address department-specific needs. T. Moore notes that in the Faculty Handbook, the department chair has enumerated responsibilities. M. Fetscherin suggests, then, not a change in structure, but enforcing the policy as written, noting a hesitancy to reinvent the wheel. Focusing on teaching evaluation, L. Joyner suggests a more immediate solution of a rubric for teaching assessment distributed to all departments. L. Joyner also suggests that departments could submit standards for teaching assessment to be evaluated by FSC and FEC.

- c. Feedback to administrators—tabled to next week
- d. CIE Tutorial—tabled to next week

2) New Business

- a. Guidance on materials for tenure and promotion—we addressed this during our discussion of teaching evaluation and noted that both projects share similar goals.

3) The meeting was adjourned at 5pm.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Russell.

Attachments (2)

To: Lewis Duncan
From: Professional Standards Committee
Date: October 9, 2009
Subject: Administrator Review

In response to your memorandum of September 22, 2009 the Professional Standards Committee has met and discussed the impending review of the Provost. The Committee believes that the general process you have outlined is acceptable; however, we propose a few changes before forwarding it to the Executive Committee.

- 1) A “360 degree review” implies that there is input from subordinates, peers, and superiors. The lack of someone superior to the provost being part of the evaluation committee appears to make this a “240 degree review”. The PSC suggests that the review committee include either yourself, or a knowledgeable member of the Board of Trustees.
- 2) The distinction between the A&S faculty and Holt faculty is not consistent with the organization of the College. As you know, we have only two faculties, A&S and Crummer. Therefore, we suggest appointing three A&S faculty members to the review committee. It will be left to the A&S faculty to ensure that there is representation from all of the constituents.
- 3) The PSC believes that the A&S faculty should have a say in the form of the input that is submitted to the committee, rather than the committee alone making that determination. Since the committee is charged with performing the review, it must provide some methods for input from all of the interested parties. However, the wording you suggest implies that the committee will not consider input in any form other than those it directs. Since the faculty of the College are a minority on the committee, there is concern that relevant information from the faculty will not be considered because it is not in an approved form.
- 4) Given the centrality of the Arts and Sciences to the College, the PSC strongly recommends that one of the administrators on the committee be the Dean of the Faculty ex-officio.

Again, the Committee genuinely appreciates your invitation to provide input into this process. There is a concern, however, that by waiting until an impending review to establish the process for evaluation it may appear that suggested changes are being influenced by a collective knowledge of the current office holder. Therefore, we would like to begin conversations on the evaluation of other administrators in the very near future. By establishing the process for review well in advance of its use, we hope to avoid any appearance that the process is being shaped by a consideration of the person currently in the position.

Evaluation of Faculty Teaching

Current Status:

1. Used for promotion & tenure, post-tenure review, and midcourse review
2. Faculty Salary Council

Methods:

1. Student CIE
2. Some peer review by departments
3. FSC uses *only* student CIE

Problems:

1. Too much emphasis on CIE
2. Many problems with CIE, including lack of correlation with faculty demand and CIE outcome.
3. Some correlation between GPA and CIE score.
4. Lack of correlation of instructor's ratings with degree of standards set by the faculty.
5. Little use is made to improve teaching performance.
6. Students don't know the following:
 - a. Appropriateness of instructor objections
 - b. Instructor's knowledge of subject matter.
 - c. The quality and appropriateness of assessment methods
 - d. The quality and appropriateness of grading standards.
 - e. Instructor's support of department teaching effort, curricular development, and mentoring of new faculty.
 - f. Instructor's contribution to the departmental climate of enhanced instructional effort.

Institutional overemphasis on the numbers: What is the significance and differences between a rating of 4.0 versus 4.1. Real or imaginary? Departmental and discipline differences in expectation of student outcomes.

Solution: Increased Emphasis on Peer Review (just one of many different aspects of teaching that should be included in faculty evaluation):

1. Reduce the component represented by CIE to no more than 25% of the overall process.
2. Survey alums.
3. Develop standards of performance, i.e., what are the expectations of a *good to great* professor?
4. Involve all faculty members within the department to evaluate the teaching aspect.
5. Involve outside members of the department in the evaluation.
6. Obtain evaluations from outside the institution of faculty at "peer" institutions.
7. Self-evaluation (some of this is currently found in the FSAR).
8. Other: Dean of Faculty and Department Chair.

Useful References:

1. *Evaluation of Faculty Performance: A Practical Guide to Assessing Teaching, Research, and Service*", Peter Seldin, Anker Publishing/Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2006.
2. *Peer Review of Teaching: A Source Book*, 2nd edition, N. Van Note Chism, Anker Publishing/Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2007.
3. *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System: A Guide to Designing, Building, and Operating Large-Scale Faculty Evaluation Systems*, 3rd edition, Raoul A. Arreola, Anker Publishing/Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2007.