

## Professional Affairs Committee

### 2017-2018 Year-End Report

**Members:** Rick Althaus (Chair), Jennifer Bengtson, (Vice-Chair), Shelba Branscum (fall semester), Arsalan Gharaveis (spring semester), Carl Hess, Ziping Liu, Alisha Ortiz, and Holly Wagner.

The Professional Affairs Committee met 12 times during the year from September 13 to April 18.

#### **Summary of Committee Activities:**

1. The Committee recommended to the Senate and the Senate passed 4 bills recommending that emeritus/emerita status be conferred upon 25 retiring faculty members, representing a total of 666 years of service to the University.
2. The Committee conferred with Dr. Cheryl McAllister, Chair of the University Tenure and Promotion and Sabbatical Leave Advisory Committee, and other relevant stakeholders regarding the common understanding of the meaning of the term "Record of Service," as used in the "Faculty Tenure and Promotion Policy." The general understanding seems to be that this refers to a listing of a faculty member's activities during the relevant reporting period, arranged to correspond to the format of the approved departmental criteria. Because this understanding seemed widespread, the Committee decided that amending the policy to add additional clarification would be unnecessary.
3. Because the requirement to use the electronic dossier system for promotion, tenure, and post-professorial merit is being held in abeyance, the Committee recommended that a physical limit for hard-copy documentation be set. Following study, it was determined that a previously-used limit of two three-inch binders with "D" rings would closely approximate the electronic dossier limit of 1200 pages. At the suggestion of the Committee, Provost Karl Kunkel and Senate Chair Jim McGill sent a co-signed letter to the broader campus community asking candidates to comply with that limit.
4. A member of the Committee, Dr. Alisha Ortiz, has been serving on an ad hoc committee with two other department Chairpersons, Drs. Kevin Hampton and Joe Pujol, and together they are reviewing Handbook provisions regarding the "annual merit" process as they relate to Department Chairpersons. They have been meeting with other stakeholders, and Dr. Ortiz has been keeping the Committee informed about their progress. Once the ad hoc group develops a proposal for modification of the Handbook language, that proposal will be referred to the Committee for potential legislative action.
5. The Committee had plans to continue its work from previous sessions regarding Handbook provisions on "Conflict of Interest" and "Termination of Faculty Employment," both of which were sections that had been assigned to the Committee for possible revision. However, both topics are likely to require input from University legal counsel before the Handbook provisions would be changed. Because of that, because of uncertainty surrounding inaction by President Vargas regarding Committee legislation passed by the Senate over the past two years, and because of additional uncertainty surrounding the President's announced interest in having a centralized "policy register," the Committee chose not to invest additional effort into those two topics during this session.
6. Following the Committee's recommendation of the four Emeritus/Emerita bills, members of the Committee began hearing informal comments from a variety of sources questioning the traditional role and procedures regarding emeritus/emerita status at Southeast. After doing research into procedures elsewhere, and deliberating with certain stakeholders on this campus, the Committee undertook to prepare a report to the Senate and to the broader University community responding to those questions and defending the Southeast practices.

7. At the invitation of the Committee, Provost Kunkel met with the Committee on two occasions to discuss pending issues. During a fall meeting, the topic of "Conflict of Interest" was discussed, and the Provost offered a suggested self-reporting form that might be used by faculty members to report annually whether they are involved in activities that might constitute a conflict of interest. During a spring meeting, the Provost and the Committee discussed the matter of emeritus/emerita practices at Southeast.

8. The Committee proposed and the Senate approved a resolution (17-2) clarifying the charge of the Professional Affairs Committee. As a result, it is now specified that merit policies and procedures come under the purview of the Committee, in addition to promotion and tenure policies and procedures.

**Recommended Agenda items for the 2018-2019 year:**

1. Verify with the Administration regarding its interest in considering revisions to the section of Chapter 2 of the Faculty Handbook dealing with "Termination of Faculty Employment." If the Administration is receptive, the Committee could develop recommendations in the form of a bill or bills.

2. Verify with the Administration regarding its interest in considering revisions to Chapter 3, Section B "Conflicts of Interest Policy" in the Faculty Handbook. If the Administration is receptive, the Committee could develop recommendations in the form of a bill or bills.

3. Receive recommendations from the three-member ad hoc committee of Department Chairpersons regarding the Annual Merit Pay Policy. Possibly develop legislation in accordance with those recommendations, which might include calendar clarification and other revisions as needed (i.e. separate chair merit requirements from faculty).

4. Continue to process recommendations for emeritus/emerita status for retiring faculty members, as appropriate.

5. Update the Sick Leave Policy to make recommendations as needed upon review of current policy.

6. Continue to monitor matters regarding tenure, promotion, post-professorial merit, annual merit, and makeup of the faculty, and respond as appropriate.

7. Play a proactive role in the matter of possible future use of electronic portfolios, as set out in the Handbook section on Promotion and Tenure policy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rick Althaus

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