

MINUTES:
OCTOBER 18 MEETING OF THE TENURE POLICY COMMITTEE

Fourteen of nineteen members were present for the meeting, and two issues were addressed:

- 1) Should the size of the campus p/t committee be reduced from 19 to, say, seven or eight members?
- 2) Should an individual faculty member be limited to serving (or voting) on a single p/t committee in a single year?

ISSUE OF MAINTAINING OR REDUCING THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS ON THE CAMPUS P/T COMMITTEE

After a lengthy discussion (almost two hours) a vote was taken on the two issues. The first issue was addressed with the following motion:
“The campus committee will maintain the present composition of having one representative from each department on campus.”

The vote was:

Yes: 9

No: 4

Abstain: 1

Arguments made in favor of retaining the present composition (with every department represented included:

- 1) The decisions (better term: recommendations) made there are too important to omit any departments; there should be full representation.
- 2) A larger number is less likely to be influenced by a single strong personality.
- 3) The work load (including the writing of a letter about each candidate) would be more burdensome with a smaller committee. For example, instead of each committee member writing a letter about one candidate, he/she might have to write two (or in some cases three) letters.
- 4) The committee has an evaluative function (in addition to checking to see if all required procedures have been properly followed.) The larger number brings a wider perspective.

(And incidentally, one member asked: “Why is a large committee bad?”)

As for the case in favor of reducing the number of members of the campus p/t committee, a single main argument was advanced: The present composition is unnecessarily bulky, and prior to the elimination of the deans, each college had two

representatives plus an additional member (selected by the Academic Council?). That system worked well in the past, and there's no reason why it shouldn't work well if reinstated. In particular, most of the evaluative process is carried out at the departmental and college levels; the need for evaluative work by a large campus p/t committee no longer pertains as it did when there were no deans.

And members opposed to a single faculty member serving on more than one p/t committee in a single academic year see a smaller campus p/t committee as automatically reducing this so called "double dipping."

Also, one member urged that a member of the Personnel Committee be included to help increase fairness. In this regard, he wrote to me on October 20:

"...1) I mentioned the practice that a Personnel Committee member was a member of the campus P&T committee in one of its pre-no-Dean avatars and that it be considered in case we have a smaller committee. 2) You shared with us that you used to serve in smaller campus P&T committees and you did not find them unfair to any candidate anytime. Would you mind making that also be a part of this summary?"

Yes, the member is certainly correct. I never found the earlier, seven-member campus committee to be unfair; that committee did fine work. But I don't remember us handling any appeals. And the writing of letters about individual candidates didn't begin until Provost Wray's first year here.

ISSUE OF LIMITING AN INDIVIDUAL FACULTY MEMBER TO SERVING (CHANGE THAT TO "VOTING") ON A SINGLE P/T COMMITTEE IN A SINGLE YEAR TO AVOID SO-CALLED "DOUBLE-DIPPING."

This issue produced the longest discussion, with some members voicing strong opinions pro or con. Those in favor of the voting limitation regard "double dipping" as inherently unfair. An example cited in support of that view involved an alleged case in one department in which a faculty member voted against a candidate in the department p/t committee and then had the opportunity to vote and argue against the candidate at the next two levels too. In the same vein, once a p/t representative has voted for or against a candidate at one level, the representative might feel unduly committed to maintaining that position at the next level.

Members speaking against limiting the voting of a single faculty member in a given academic year argued that there is nothing inherently unfair in having the most knowledgeable faculty member (one in the department of the candidate) representing his/her department throughout the process. To those faculty, this is

basically a non-issue. Any bias can be countered by various members of the next-level p/t committee referring to the evidence in the dossier.

It was also pointed out that small departments might not have enough full-professors to send different full-professor faculty to three different p/t committees. In some cases a full professor might be available but have no particular interest in dealing with p/t matters outside his/her department.

It was recognized by the Tenure Policy Committee members that a departmental representative would in fact be good to have present, especially to answer questions. The pro-limitation faculty then proposed a compromise: The department representative could be present at the next-level p/t committee meeting but not participate unless specifically asked by one or more members of that next-level p/t committee to provide clarification.

A concern was then voiced that the faculty member serving only to provide clarification and otherwise required to refrain from speaking might convey his/her opinion in a non-verbal way, e.g., a frown. And if he/she did speak out, even briefly, might the process thereby be tainted?

Voting then occurred on the following motion:

“When the case of a candidate is being discussed in the college or campus p/t committee, the department representative should only participate in discussions to provide clarification if asked questions. The department representation should not vote on either committee.”

The voting result:

Yes: 7

No: 6

Abstain: 0

Note: In preparing these minutes after the meeting I noticed that the vote total for this second motion is thirteen (vs. fourteen for the first one). The committee has no explanation for this slight discrepancy.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Cohen