

Minutes

Faculty Standards Committee of the University Senate

March 2, 2020 (2:30 p.m., Rome Portico, Storrs Campus)

The following FSC members were in attendance.

- *Preston Britner, Chair, Human Development & Family Sciences
- *Marysol Asencio, El Instituto
- *Dan Burkey, Engineering
- *Phillip Gould, Physics
- *Lisa Holle, Pharmacy Practice
- *Vicki Magley, Psychological Sciences
- *Linda Pescatello, Kinesiology
- *Paula Philbrick, EEB, Waterbury Campus
- *Del Siegle, Education
- *Sarah Woulfin, Educational Leadership
- Cynthia Gerber, Graduate Student
- Lewis Gordon, Philosophy
- Martina Rosenberg, CETL
- John Volin, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (*ex officio*)

1) Old Business

- a) The Dec. 9, 2019 and Feb. 3, 2020 Minutes were approved unanimously.
- b) The following statement was approved unanimously (and was then submitted to the SEC).

FSC Response to the SEC: Sabbatical Leaves for Non-Tenure Track Faculty

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) tasked the Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) with investigating whether non-tenure track faculty were eligible for sabbatical leaves.

The University By-Laws (Section XIII L 1) and current practice are not in sync with respect to the eligibility of non-tenure track faculty to apply for sabbatical leave. The By-Laws do not restrict sabbatical leave to those on the tenure track. Rather, they simply state that individuals are eligible if they meet the following: full-time teachers, assistant professor/equivalent rank or higher; continuous full-time service for at least 12 of the 14 semesters preceding the leave. In addition, the By-Laws are clear that “[s]abbatical leave is a privilege to be applied for in each case and is in no instance to be considered an earned perquisite.” Faculty must make a case for “the advancement of knowledge or professional improvement of mutual benefit to the University and the individual.” Before a request goes to the Provost or appropriate Vice President, the written application must be approved by the department head, and by the dean or director. The department head must “certify whether or not the work of the department can be carried on if the

leave is granted” and that leaves are not expected to be granted “if they must be taken at the expense of the students or of the regular departmental program.”

Given this, the Faculty Standards Committee of the University Senate recommends that, to be consistent with the existing By-Laws, the University should not categorically reject applications for sabbaticals from non-tenure track faculty. Rather, the University should consider applications for sabbatical leaves from all eligible faculty members, including non-tenure track faculty, and evaluate those applications using the considerations outlined above.

2) New Business

Martina Rosenberg (CETL) led us in a discussion of FSC-relevant matters on teaching. No votes were taken.

a) University-wide definition of teaching excellence

What does UConn want? Evidence-based? Inclusive? Current language in the academic plan is broad. With life transformative education, there could be some overlap. Advising and mentoring are also important.

Departments aren't always clear on definitions, pathways, and resources. With PTR standards, defining “excellence” is vital. We need program-level information (e.g., evidence of student learning), but individuals instructors must also be evaluated, too.

b) Strengthening educational/pedagogical scholarship

Rosenberg questioned whether pedagogical scholarship was undervalued. Volin didn't share that concern.

c) Recommendations around SET/SET+

Volin: Most Departments have not implemented SET+ systems. Currently, it is required – but there is nothing specific demanded. His concern is that the lack of response will lead an overly specified path in the next round of contract negotiations.

A number of ideas were raised:

- Take a look at the University of Oregon's model (no numeric SETs; start with prompts, get quotes).
- Consider asking departments to submit their own definition, policy, metrics, procedures of observing/assessing.
- Why don't we allow external evaluators for PTR (tenure track) to weigh in on teaching/advising/mentoring?
- Student (undergraduate and graduate) testimonials could be sought, from former honors students, grad students, students for whom the candidate has written letters.

We could do this in parallel to external reviewers re. teaching.

- Can SET comments go to DH, Dean, and Provost? Can we change this? Should we? [Could be used for thematic analysis by candidate, but also by others.]
- What can we glean from existing resources? What should be the frequency of assessments? Can we tap undergrad and grad directors and advisors re. teaching/advising/mentoring? Consider implications for regional faculty.
- SET: Interpretation! 3= Good. Not bad! Remind of interpretation, focus more on categories like “How much did I learn?”

d) Non-tenure track town hall meetings

Departments – and the candidate -- must engage in SET+. How do we support portfolios, etc. for non-TT faculty?

e) Other relevant items?

Britner raised a question about how easy/difficult it will be to obtain external letters evaluating teaching faculty. Volin stated that this hasn't been a problem.

Further discussion should address what UConn wants for an SET+ system.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.