

Annual Report

Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) of the University Senate

April 2021

The FSC membership for academic year 2020-2021 included:

***Lisa Holle, Chair, Pharmacy Practice**

*Marysol Asencio, El Instituto

*Dan Burkey, Engineering

*Elizabeth Jockusch, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

*Vicki Magley, Psychological Sciences

*Betsy McCoach, Neag

*Linda Pescatello, Kinesiology

*Paula Philbrick, EEB, Waterbury Campus

*Cristina Wilson, School of Social Work

*Sarah Woulfin, Educational Leadership

Preston Britner, Human Development & Family Sciences

Sam Dorman, USG Representative

Lewis Gordon, Philosophy

Kathleen Holgerson, Women's Center

Girish Punj, Marketing

Martina Rosenberg, CETL

Jeffrey Shoulson, Senior Vice Provost, Ex-Officio member

Spencer Sonnenburg, Graduate Student

**Senate Member 2020/2021*

Committee charge:

This committee shall continuously review University policies and practices relating to tenure, academic freedom, workloads, rank and promotion, remuneration, retirement, and other matters affecting the faculty and shall propose any desirable expression of Senate opinion on these matters, including proposals to the Trustees for modifications in their rules and regulations on these matters.

The FSC met nine times during the academic year. Detailed minutes from all meetings are available on the Senate website. We focused on the potential implications of several initiatives that related to tenure, rank and promotion, retirement, and faculty workload and/or academic freedom.

Major Items of Discussion

Research Grant Deadlines proposed enforcement policy

In the Fall 2020, SPS proposed enforcement of an existing policy on research proposal deadline indicating all proposals must be submitted to SPS 5 business days before the deadline day. Proposals that were not received five business days prior to the deadline day, or which were not

complete, would not be reviewed or submitted, with each investigator allowed one “exception” to these deadlines during the first transition year.

FSC discussed many aspects of this topic (over several meetings including meetings with OVPR administrators) including: reasons for bottlenecking of proposals, stress and pressure put on SPS staff, significant delays in review for those investigators submitting in advance of the deadlines, the potential for a reduction in quality of rushed reviews, concerns about imposing this deadline in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this might impact faculty who are not only adapting their teaching and research programs may be doing so in a less than ideal environment because of family situations also dealing with pandemic and might pre-tenured faculty and other underrepresented groups; and need for all stakeholders to be engaged in reviewing the proposal for enforcement of the internal deadline for grant proposals before enforced. A motion was approved and submitted to the University Senate for endorsement.

Motion:

The Faculty Standards Committee moves that the University Senate endorse the following recommendation.

The Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) recommends the formation of a faculty-staff-OVPR working group, formed and charged by the President, to identify impediments to the expeditious review of proposals in advance of deadlines and propose solutions, to be presented to the University Senate and the OVPR, that enable all parties to work together effectively to support the University’s pre-award operations. A report including the proposed solution will be presented to the University Senate at the March 2021 meeting. The FSC requests no changes in enforcement of the policy until the working group recommendations have been received and evaluated.

This motion was endorsed by the University Senate at the December 2020 meeting and the President formed the Presidential Task Force on Sponsored Projects, which created a final report identifying challenges and recommended actions presented their report to the Senate at the March 2021 meeting (and posted on the Senate website):

<https://senate.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1323/2021/03/Final-Report-Presidential-Task-Force-on-Sponsored-Projects.pdf>.

OVPR reported during town hall meetings on March and April 2021 how they are working to address some of these challenges and recommendations and will begin the enforcement policy on May 5, 2021.

Emeritus By-Law Revision

Senate Executive Committee asked FSC to revisit a University by-law amendment proposal that allowed automatic professor emeritus status if retiring at rank of professor with 5 years of service. This proposed by-law amendment had endorsed by Senate in 2017 but not moved forward by the Administration at that time.

FSC discussed many aspects of this (over several meetings) including: process for such a by-law amendment recommendation; current Administration’s interest in this proposed change; peer and aspirant university related policies; whether this should apply to all tenured faculty, CIRE faculty of equivalent rank, administrative and staff positions; minimum service requirement;

process for removing “emeritus status” for any reason; pros/cons to presumptive/automatic status vs committee review/recommendation; current process for those who don’t qualify for automatic status; frequency of staff/administrators who obtain emeritus status through non-automatic status; legalities of potential process for removing status if deemed appropriate for misconduct etc (obtained advice from General Counsel)

A motion was approved and submitted to the University Senate for endorsement :

Motion:

The Faculty Standards Committee moves that the University Senate endorse the following recommendation.

(Deleted items in ~~strike through~~; new language underlined)

Article XIV.K.2

- a. The faculty member holds the rank of Associate Professor or full Professor (or equivalent title, such as ~~e.g. Clinical, In-Residence and Extension Faculty [CIRE]~~ Senior Extension Educator, Cooperative Extension Educator, Associate Cooperative Extension Educator, Extension Professor, and Associate Extension Professor) at the University of Connecticut.
- b. The faculty member has served at the University of Connecticut for at least five years ~~at this rank.~~

Article XIV.K 4. Emeritus status is a privilege, not a right, and can be revoked at any time at the request of the President and/or Retirement Committee with approval of the Board of Trustees

This motion passed at the University Senate February 2021 meeting and was forwarded to the Provost’s office to bring to the Board of Trustees meeting in Spring 2021.

Distinguished Professor Titles

Both committee members and the Provost’s office independently asked the committee to have discussions on exploring possibilities of new “distinguished professor” type designations as well as evaluating our current Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor process, with consideration of the value of these types of titles for recruiting, retention, and supporting current and/or future initiatives that are value/mission-based.

FSC discussions (over several meetings) included: usefulness of another title; title designation by administration or faculty peer-review; overlap with current BOT nomination/selection process; concern of lack of diversity among current BOT nominations and distinguished professor; endowed chair professorship and overlap; Provost’s goal for these types of designations; focus of awards: eligibility (full vs full/associate; tenure/CIRE); and sustainability.

Action items: formation of 3 working groups to:

- 1) review current BOT distinguished professor process (members from FSC and JEDI committees) and consider 1) increasing diversity of candidate pool and hopefully BOT awareness and 2) increasing diversity, including more broad representation of disciplines, on the selection committee.

Workgroup identified 4 initial areas to focus recommended improvements: 1) diversify selection committee in regards to demographics but also disciplines/all schools, colleges,

centers etc, more than prior winners including staff, community members; 2) providing guidance to nominators, such as a template; 3) providing individualized, developmental and supportive feedback to those finalists who are not selected; 4) recommend record keeping of process for transparency/future improvement. Working group is developing more specific guidance by end of spring semester to share with committee and Provost's office.

- 2) develop a proposal for a Dean's Level "distinguished professor" type designation to be used for recruitment and retention

Guidance from Provost's office obtained about a possible process for developing/designating these titles. FSC discussion included: faculty involvement in designation of awardees; establishment of a maximum proportion of school/college of # of full-time faculty that could have these titles; financial reward accompanying title for limited time but title in perpetuity; consideration of time-sensitive, nimbleness of retention offers and how to incorporate this; concern for potential rewarding of faculty who may be rewarded by other means; current administrative policy vs long-term policy across administrations; and whether input needed from Senate or unions? Plan to continue discussions with proposal by end of Spring semester.

- 3) develop a proposal for a Provost's level "distinguished professor" type designation to be used for and recognize current UConn faculty who have completed work in inclusion/inclusivity or life transformative education

Working group met with Provost to clarify intentions of such titles. Work group is drafting a proposal to present to FSC for consideration

SET+

A working group was formed of FSC and other university members to discuss challenges with SET, SET+ and possible solutions. The working group has met a couple of times and have identified 5 problems areas: 1) equity; 2) marketing/leadership signaling; 3) validation; 4) impact for professional development; 5) administrative utility and recommended some short-term improvements to consider 1) incentivized/mandated holistic approach to teaching evaluations and 2) improve SET response rates and emphasize means as metric or rely on other student feedback and long-term (a thorough revision of institutional evaluation philosophy and practices).

FSC discussions included: SET response rates, differences in department practices for SET+; engaging other university workgroups/comments also working on this topic; SET measuring student satisfaction vs teaching effectiveness; emphasis on SET as primary evaluative tool; does contract negotiation need to be considered if changes to teaching evaluation made

Workgroup requested some further clarification from Provost's office regarded charges and received feedback that caused a pause/redirection of work. Work is ongoing to provide guidance.

Bi-Annual PTR Forum

- Held Tenure-Track Promotion, Tenure & Reappointment on Friday, March 19, 2021, from 3:00pm-5:00pm via WebEx. Invited AAUP leadership to provide introduction and recommendations. Administration provided guidance during first hour and break-out sessions for specific Schools/Colleges was held during 2nd hour
- Determined a 2nd PTR forum specific to CIRE and research only faculty was needed based on high RSVP rate. To be held on May 21st 1-3 pm. Request questions from faculty interested in attending to guide discussion.
- High attendance rate of 1st PTR forum; perhaps due to virtual meeting, which may allow more faculty from regional campuses to attend. Plan to hold yearly and with virtual option in future.

Policy Statement Reviews

FSC reviewed and commented on several topics/documents that were sent to us by the SEC or Administration.

- Optional SETs for Fall 2020 - committee agreed to proposed recommendation to Senate to continue SET administration during Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 but to encourage Administration to consider the SETs during this time in light of the pandemic impact on teaching and instruction
- Tenure clock extension - the Provost's office is planning to recommend to the BOT to amend the University By-Laws to allow faculty, including new faculty starting in Fall 2020, to take up to 3 total tenure clock extensions for FMLA (if eligible) or COVID-19 reasons. Committee was in favor of the Administration's plan to recommend the amendment for tenure clock extensions as listed above as well as exploring other long-term solutions that address COVID-19 impact on faculty.
- Potential Spring SET 2021 change for online/distance learning class – Provost Lejeuz requested input from FSC on whether questions should be added to Spring SET 2021 that would better represent online/distance learning classes. FSC committee discussed several concerns and shared these with the Provost as well as these recommendations for Spring 2021 SETs
 - Do not include new/revised questions as part of evaluative part of SETs; the calculation of the median scores and should not be included in PTR packets
 - Could include new/revised questions for formative purposes only that faculty could OPT IN to include as part of optional SET questions (rather than added across the board) or as another survey that faculty could offer during the course
- Retirement Committee – Provost Lejeuz asked for input on whether the Retirement Committee was still needed if the Emeritus By-Law amendment passed. FSC recommended that committee continue but could be ad hoc

FSC members participated in several SEC/Administration workgroups affecting faculty

- Work life balance workgroup
- Post-Covid Teaching workgroup
- Civility workgroup

- Pay Equity workgroups – retention
- COACHE survey workgroup
- Presidential Task Force on Sponsored Projects
- Future of Learning Committee