

The Faculty Affairs Committee of the University Senate is proposing the following change to the Academic Procedures Manual (p. N-75) regarding composition of the primary committee:

We recommend the inclusion of associate professors in the primary committee.

A. Justifications for this change:

1. Benefits of Associate Professor Participation

Allowing associate professors to participate on the primary committee will:

- **Help to demystify the process and make it more inclusive.**
- **Enhance communication between and within faculties.**
- **Improve the fairness and openness of the process.**
- **Create a more diverse primary committee.**
- **Bring us in line with our peer institutions and other well-respected universities in the U.S.**
- **Benefit Purdue by making it easier to hire and retain the best possible faculty.**

2. Supporting documents:

(a) Washington Advisory Group (April 2003) recommendation:

“...Tenured associate professors should be included on tenure committees since, in many cases, they are the most active in research and most capable of judging a candidates research contribution...” (p. 32, A Review of the Research Enterprise at Purdue University)

http://www2.itap.purdue.edu/provost/shtml/doc_and_forms/wash.pdf

(b) Response to 2001 Faculty Survey, Assessment of the Purdue Faculty Culture, especially Question 23 regarding attitudes about the primary committee and area committee review process:

[Purdue Faculty Career and Personal Satisfaction Questionnaire Snap Shot](#)

B. Summary of comments from the Faculty Forum (held Sept. 16, 2004) concerning the proposed change:

1. Comments in favor of the proposed change:

- All tenured professors have a significant interest in the long-term health of the schools and an important component of that health is making good decisions about tenure. The tenure decision affects the working environment of all tenured faculty.
- Associates should have the right to help shape the future of the Department. Many associate professors will become Full Professors and are an excellent source of information and are likely quite helpful in tenure decision-making.
- Since Associate Professors have cleared the tenure hurdle, they represent a valuable source of information and insight about research, teaching and service quality. They are also likely to be able to give better advice as mentors for untenured faculty.
- The incorporation of a broader, more diverse set of views in the tenure process would only strengthen the process and quality of the tenure decision. More diverse groups make more robust decisions and the current system is exclusionary. The proposed change is attractive because it allows more inclusiveness.
- Several faculty indicated that the current system at Purdue was very different from those of other Universities where they had held positions. Having experienced the results of alternative systems, the current process at Purdue that excluded Associate Professors was viewed as exclusionary, closed, and with suspicion.
- Some faculty commented that potential candidates had refused to join the faculty at Purdue because of the exclusion of associate professors from the Primary Committee.

2. Comments against the proposed change:

- Associates included in the process might feel implicit pressure. There are likely many cases in which Associate Professors will not want to participate in the process.
- Including Associate Professors will not result in different or better tenure decisions.
- Adding Associate Professors will make Primary Committees that are already large and unwieldy even larger and more unwieldy.
- Other problems with the promotion process, such as a lack of standardization across campus, should be addressed.
- Some departments spend a lot of time explaining the process and mentoring untenured faculty so do not expect the inclusion of Associates to make the process more transparent.
- Associate Professors are not necessarily the most active researchers. Good Associate Professors will eventually gain the right to participate in the process, giving the department and the School the benefit of having their views and values.
- The process will not have the desired level of transparency. A suggestion was made to invite Associate Professors who might have a special input on a given candidate to that particular promotion meeting, i.e., have the Associate Professors participate when their input will be useful.
- Many arguments against the inclusion of Associate Professors focused on the mechanics of the process, such as making the Primary Committee too large to be effective. Several suggested that the Primary Committee should be made up of only a subset of Full Professors rather than all Full Professors.
- While recognizing the desirability of having greater diversity in terms of race, class, gender and age on the Primary Committee, the solution to making the process more understandable and transparent is in providing better feedback, more mentoring support, and having people with more management skills related to personnel matters.

If you would like to make additional comments, please send an e-mail to William Zinsmeister, Chair of the University Senate Faculty Affairs Committee, e-mail: wjzins@purdue.edu.