

POST-TENURE REVIEW
Department of English
1998

Preamble

In complying with the post-tenure review policy passed by the general faculty in spring 1998, the English Department strongly endorses the philosophies espoused by the American Association of University Professors in "Post-Tenure Review: an AAUP Response," *Academe*, September-October 1998, 61-67, quoted below in italics. Our general endorsement includes several specific concerns and beliefs that lie behind the criteria and procedures devised by the department for post-tenure review.

First, we concur with the AAUP Report that tenured faculty nationally are *already recurrently subject to a variety of forms of evaluation of their work (61)*. These include periodic reviews for appointment; salary determination; promotion; grants and awards; sabbaticals; program reviews for accreditation; and appointment to endowed chairs, committees, graduate faculties, interdisciplinary programs, and learned societies. Further, the state of South Carolina requires periodic review of faculty and programs by the Commission on Higher Education. English, for example, was reviewed in 1997-98 by four faculty members from other universities.

In spite of the difficulties of evaluating so large and so diverse a department (55 faculty in some six areas), the English Department has taken its own responsibilities to evaluate faculty performance especially seriously. Not only are all candidates and untenured faculty rigorously reviewed in scholarship and teaching, but also tenured faculty are subject to periodic and rigorous review. For over ten years, the department has required all faculty to conduct student evaluations of all classes. Annually those evaluations are scrutinized by members of the Teaching Committee, who visit the classes of the four faculty earning the top student marks and select a recipient for the Teacher of the Year Award. Faculty scholarship is the subject of open debate during our series of Faculty Colloquia, in which colleagues present work in progress for comment. All departmental administrators are reviewed via written surveys each spring.

Perhaps the most systematic and complete departmental review is the annual evaluation conducted by the Salary Subcommittee of the Faculty Advisory Committee each spring. Every member of the department must submit detailed reports and materials related to the year's work in teaching, research, and service. The Salary Committee also has access to all the student evaluations of teaching, plus any evaluative comments from committee chairs about the work of faculty in their committees. The evaluations of the committee are forwarded to the chair, who conducts his own review and writes each of us a letter evaluating our year's work on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), justifying our raise or lack thereof, and suggesting areas for improvement. The chair's letters and the faculty members' reports are forwarded to the dean for further review.

Never before have our professional lives been so open to such widespread public scrutiny. Our academic records and accomplishments and even our photographs now appear on the department's website.

Thus, we fully endorse AAUP's conclusion that post-tenure review seems both redundant and time-consuming. *Any minimal benefits will almost assuredly be outweighed by the costs to the faculty*

and the institution in terms of diverted time and energy devoted to observation and comment, along with the attendant logistical and paperwork burdens (62). While we have tried to reduce duplication and paperwork by utilizing as many processes already in place as possible, the drain on faculty time and energy, as well as the need to maintain ever fuller files, simply cannot be eliminated in the criteria and procedures given below, nor can the demeaning effects of perpetual evaluations.

Second, we endorse AAUP's grave concern that post-tenure review must not be used to circumvent existing procedures for revoking tenure. We must not permit the public's misunderstanding of tenure to trigger abuses of academic freedom and the collegial nature of the academy. According to AAUP, *the most objectionable feature of many systems of post-tenure review is that they ease the prevailing standards for dismissal and diminish the efficacy of those procedures that ensure that sanctions are not imposed for reasons violative of academic freedom (64).* We believe that post-tenure review cannot legitimately be a reevaluation of tenure, nor may it be used to transform the burden of proof for dismissal from the administration into a burden of proof for non-dismissal by the individual faculty member. The department, therefore, takes seriously the university administration's assurances that all the current procedures and standards for dismissal for cause remain in place and will continue to be followed, and we have devised our post-tenure review procedures with those assurances in mind.

Third, we believe that even if the great majority of post-tenure reviews results in appraisals of "satisfactory," the process itself suggests investigations of productivity inappropriate to the spirit of free inquiry. *A central dimension of academic freedom and tenure is the exercise of professional judgment in such matters as the selection of research projects, teaching methods, student evaluations, and course curricula, as well as the choice of colleagues. Conversely, more frequent and formal reviews may lead faculty members to pick safe and quick, but less potentially valuable, research projects to minimize the risk of failure or delayed achievement (65).* Accordingly, we have incorporated appropriate cautions below about the importance of distinguishing between negligent performance of responsibilities and the right of a faculty member to select an unorthodox method of performance or to undertake a long-term project.

Fourth, the public nature of the process has the potential for violating basic tenets of collegiality, humanity, and decency. We have tried to reduce that potential in our departmental procedures by stressing the developmental aspect of plans of action for anyone receiving an unsatisfactory review and by allowing several opportunities to appeal. We intend for our criteria and procedures to be both professionally sound and personally humane--but we remain doubtful about the ability of any department to accomplish this dual goal with any consistency.

Finally, we fully concur with AAUP's recommendation that any post-tenure review process itself be periodically evaluated with respect to:

- *its effectiveness in supporting faculty development*
- *redressing problems of faculty performance*
- *the time and cost of the effort required, and*
- *the degree to which in practice it has been effectively cordoned off--as it must be if it is to be constructive--from disciplinary procedures and sanctions (66).*

We urge the university to undertake such an evaluation, and we will be prepared to participate at the departmental level.

CRITERIA

While the department recognizes that professorial careers may assume a variety of shapes over time, there is also recognition that every professor at every rank should maintain an *overall* competence in teaching, scholarly and/or creative endeavors, and service. In the words of AAUP, *The basic standard for appraisal should be whether the faculty member under review discharges conscientiously and with professional competence the duties appropriately associated with his or her position* (67).

1. A Superior Review

A faculty member who for the previous five years has performed at an exemplary level in the combination of teaching, scholarship and service activities most appropriate to his or her position, bringing distinction to the department and the university, will be considered to have a superior record.

2. A Satisfactory Review

A faculty member who has performed for the previous five years at an effective level in a combination of teaching, scholarship, and service activities appropriate to her or his position meets the expectations of the English department and will be considered to have a satisfactory record. This category is expected to include the majority of the department: dedicated, caring professionals whose overall work is good.

3. An Unsatisfactory Review

A faculty member who has not performed for the previous five years at an effective level in a combination of teaching, scholarship, and service activities appropriate to his or her position has not met the expectations of the English Department and will be considered to have an unsatisfactory record. This category will be used for faculty whose record indicates serious problems that need to be corrected.

PROCEDURES

1. During the spring semester, in accordance with the timetable established by the Provost's Office, the department chair will determine the faculty whose turn it will be for review in the fall, approximately one-sixth of the eligible faculty, beginning with those most senior. Seniority will be determined from the time of the last formal review for tenure and/or promotion to a higher rank. Excluded from review are faculty who notify the chair in writing of intention to retire within three

years, faculty who, during the previous five-year period, have been reviewed and advanced to or retained in a higher position, such as dean or a chaired professorship, faculty who state in writing their intention to be a candidate for promotion during the following fall semester, and, once the process has begun, those faculty who were reviewed during the previous five-year period.

2. The department chair will notify the faculty to be reviewed and will give the list to the Post-Tenure Review Committee (P-TRC).

3. The Tenure and Promotion Secretarial Committee serves as the Post-Tenure Review Committee and will elect its own chair, separate from the chair of the Secretarial Committee. Faculty will be reviewed by persons of their rank or higher.

4. The department chair will also give to the P-TRC:

Copies of the annual review letters he/she has given to those faculty during the five years covered by the review. This will include the composite scores (from 1 to 5) given by the chair as an overall evaluation of the colleague's work for the year. Since the Faculty Salary Committee, on whose work the chair has based his/her letters, has already reviewed each year's scholarship, service, and teaching annually and studied all student teaching evaluations for all classes in detail, this will assure a thorough longitudinal scrutiny of all aspects of a colleague's work.

5. The faculty to be reviewed will prepare a portfolio consisting of:

- a. Annual reports for the department and the dean from the previous five years
- b. Any contemporaneous written responses to the annual evaluations during the five years and/or an overall summary response to the evaluations prepared for this review (optional)
- c. Current vita. Peer reviewed or refereed publications should be indicated as such.
- d. Personal statement about the work of the past five years (optional for everyone *except* the recipient of a sabbatical during the previous five years, who must submit a copy of the sabbatical report)
- e. Material from teaching portfolio, such as syllabi, peer observation of classes, sample tests, or student papers (optional, since all teaching evaluations have already been reviewed by the Faculty Salary Committee each year)
- f. Anything else the faculty member wishes to include will be considered, but is not necessary.

6. The P-TRC will review the combined portfolio of materials from the faculty member and from the department chair. Committee procedures will be similar to those currently used by the Faculty Salary Committee for annual reviews.

- a. Each committee member will review the files, looking for demonstration of appropriate overall competence as a tenured university faculty member (See **CRITERIA**, above).
- b. The individual committee members' initial findings will be discussed at a committee meeting.
- c. After the meeting, final assessments of "superior," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" will be rendered individually and full written justifications given for the reasons behind the determination.
- d. The chair of the committee or his/her designee will draft a report based on the discussion and the written comments. This letter will be detailed enough for the faculty member to understand precisely what areas of accomplishment are praised by the committee and what areas may have potential for professional growth and development. For these reports the committee will keep in mind both the need for civil conduct with colleagues and the need to offer constructive suggestions or criticisms, both for the colleague's benefit and for the integrity of the institution.
- e. The draft report and its overall finding of "superior," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" must be approved by a majority of the committee.
- f. The P-TRC will send its final report to the faculty member reviewed, with a copy to the department chair. The faculty member must give written acknowledgment of receiving this report.

7. The department chair will forward a copy of the report to the Dean. Should the chair choose to include comments on the report, a copy of these comments will be sent to the faculty member being reviewed.

8. The faculty member may choose to write a response to either the report, any comments by the chair, or both. If the faculty member disagrees with the report and wishes to appeal it, the steps outlined below under **APPEALS** must be followed.

9. The committee's report, any comments by the chair, the acknowledgment, and any response letter(s) will be kept in the faculty member's departmental personnel file, marked 'For Chair's Eyes only'.

OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

1. Superior Review

Any faculty member receiving a superior review from the P-TRC must be recommended by the department chair for a special merit increase to base pay from the provost, should any special funds exist, in addition to any annual raise.

2. Satisfactory Review

Any faculty member receiving a satisfactory review will be congratulated for a job well done.

3. Unsatisfactory Review

- a. For anyone receiving an unsatisfactory review, the department, in consultation with, and with the concurrence of, the faculty member, will appoint a Development Committee to assist the faculty member in improving performance.
 - i. The Development Committee will have three members: one recommended by the faculty member and two appointed by the department chair, at least one of whom must be in the faculty member's field of work. All members of the committee must be tenured and at the rank of the faculty member or higher. The committee will elect as chair one of the members appointed by the department chair.
 - ii. In consultation with and with the concurrence of the faculty member, the committee will establish a written specific development plan to assist the faculty member in improving performance. This individualized development plan will be based only on the specific areas identified by the post-tenure review and will reflect the committee's awareness that academic freedom should not be compromised. The plan will include a reasonable timetable for making appropriate progress toward the objective of overall satisfactory performance.
 - iii. A copy of the development plan will be forwarded via the department chair to the dean with a copy to the Provost.
 - iv. The development plan will form the basis for evaluations of the faculty member until satisfactory performance is restored.
- b. At the next annual review, in addition to the regular review by the Faculty Salary Com-

mittee, the Development Committee will make an assessment of the progress of the faculty member in following the steps of the development plan. This progress report will be forwarded to the department chair, who may add any additional comments before giving copies to the faculty member and the department Tenure and Promotion Committee no later than 15 April. The faculty member may write a response and may forward that response to the T & P Committee. The T & P committee will review the progress report, will meet to discuss the progress, and will then state in written ballots its concurrence or dissent, in general or in any particular. This decision will be conveyed to the faculty member by the T & P chair.

- c. The Development Committee's progress report, any response from the faculty member, and the department Tenure and Promotion Committee's decision will be forwarded via the department chair to the dean for review.

APPEALS

Any faculty member who disagrees with the post-tenure review report may appeal in writing to the department's Tenure and Promotion Committee, in general or in any particular. The procedure will be identical to the procedure for consideration of tenure. For appeals by professors, only tenured full professors may vote; for appeals by associate professors, only tenured professors and tenured associate professor may vote; for appeals by assistant professors, all tenured professorial ranks may vote.

The P-TRC report, any comments by the chair, and the appeal letter will be available for reading by members of the T & P Committee. Following this, the T and P Committee will meet to discuss the review and the appeal; the appellant has the option, but not the requirement, to address this meeting of the committee. After the meeting, individual ballots, with justifications, will be cast, endorsing or not endorsing the post-tenure review report. The chair of the Tenure and Promotion Committee will forward to the dean the P-TRC report, the appeal letter, and the findings of the T & P Committee for final determination of the evaluation.