



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Andrew Rogerson, Chancellor

FROM: Dr. Jim Vander Putten, Associate Professor of Higher Education

DATE: May 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Faculty Senate Legislation FS_2017_4

I write in my role as Chair of the campus-wide Committee on Tenure in regard to Faculty Senate Legislation FS_2017_4 which was passed by the Faculty Senate on April 21, 2017. In brief, this legislation will modify:

- a. Faculty Annual Review Policy criteria to eliminate programmatic (i.e., student) learning outcome measures from inclusion in department chair evaluation of individual faculty instructional effectiveness, and
- b. Tenure and Promotion Policy (403.15) to eliminate programmatic (i.e., student) learning outcome measures from inclusion in faculty applications for tenure and promotion.

I first learned of Motion FS_2017_4. Council on Core Curriculum and Policies, Program Assessment in Annual Review and P&T during the faculty senate meeting on Friday, February 17, 2017. During the discussion of this motion, Council on Core Curriculum and Policies committee chair Dr. Belinda Blevins-Knabe stated that the Committee on Tenure had been consulted in the development of this motion during academic year 2015-2016. However, last year's Chair of the Committee on Tenure confirmed this to be factually incorrect.

As a result, the Committee on Tenure communicated through email between Friday, February 17 and Wednesday, March 29 on Motion FS_2017_4 and met face to face for further discussion on Thursday, March 30. During this meeting, the committee voted 5-1 to oppose the motion based on several points:

1. The proposal is potentially in conflict with University of Arkansas System Board Policy 405.1 on Appointments, Promotion, Tenure, Non-Reappointment, and Dismissal of Faculty. Specifically, page 5 of this policy includes the paragraph:

“Criteria and procedures for promotion to each rank on a campus, including an appeals procedure for those desiring reconsideration of a negative recommendation, shall be adopted by the faculty of that campus through its governance structure; the deans and chief academic officer of the campus shall have an opportunity to give their advice regarding these criteria and procedures; these criteria and procedures must be submitted to the Chancellor of the campus and the President for approval. ***More detailed criteria and procedures may be adopted by the faculty and chairperson of each academic unit; these criteria and procedures must be submitted to the dean, the chief academic officer of the campus,*** the Chancellor of the campus, and the President for approval.” (bold italics added)

We believe the Core Council’s policy meets the description of “more detailed criteria and procedures” that must be adopted by the faculty and chairperson of each academic unit. However, the Core Council’s proposed policy was neither submitted for review to the Department Chairs Council, the Deans Council, or the Provost, nor approved by any of these entities.

2. The stated mission of the Council on Core Curriculum and Policies (FS_2016_11. Modify Operating Procedures of the Council on Core Curriculum and Policies) is limited to issues related to the undergraduate curriculum. The focus of Motion FS_2017_4 addressing revisions to faculty annual review criteria and tenure and promotion processes blatantly exceeds this committee’ mission. In addition, it sets a dangerous precedent for a committee charged solely with responsibility for undergraduate curriculum issues to bypass codified procedures for annual review and tenure and promotion decision-making processes to propose changes that rightly must originate at the academic unit level.

3. In the current form, Motion FS_2017_4 is too vaguely worded to differentiate academically disengaged learners from instructional ineffectiveness. This Motion inappropriately absolves faculty of responsibility for high quality instructional practices leading to student academic success, retention, and graduation. Continuous improvement of faculty achievement of these student outcomes is critical for the growth of UA Little Rock and fulfillment of the institutional mission.

For the sake of illustration, consider the example of a full-time faculty member who has 23 consecutive class sections that included 19 class sections in which 75% or more of the students received grades of ‘D,’ ‘F,’ or withdrew from the courses. The current wording of Motion FS_2017_4 would prevent a department chair from including this valuable data in an annual review evaluation letter, or recommending appropriate professional development activities for instructional improvement. The current wording of Motion FS_2017_4 would also prevent a promotion and tenure committee from using this institutional data to inform their decision-making deliberations, and will contribute to less informed and less accurate faculty evaluations on decisions that can be long-term institutional financial commitments.

4. The Committee on Tenure reached consensus that Motion FS_2017_4 contains insufficient definitions about course-level and program-level assessment data that require clarification. Further, specific academic leadership positions would need to be identified regarding which entities are assigned this decision-making authority and responsibility for evaluating which assessment and evaluation data. Motion FS_2017_4, as written, is exclusively problem-focused and prevents the recognition of faculty annual performance that is peer-reviewed to be 'Exceptional' or even 'Satisfactory.' Exceptional faculty annual performance must receive the opportunity be recognized and celebrated, not institutionalized exclusion.

5. The last section of Motion FS_2017_4 states:

“And Be it Further Resolved to modify the Tenure and Promotion Policy (403.15) Section 2. Policies for Promotion and Tenure

Decisions on promotion and tenure shall not be based on lifestyle, political affiliations, or religious convictions.

The programmatic learning-outcomes data submitted by an individual faculty to support programmatic assessment shall not be used in promotion and tenure of that faculty; however, refusing to participate or respond to decisions based on programmatic assessment could be considered.”

Using Section 2 of the Tenure and Promotion Policy (403.15) focusing on issues of faculty “lifestyle, political affiliations, or religious convictions” as justification for excluding learning outcomes data from promotion and tenure decisions does not follow a logical chain of reasoning, and must be rejected.

Please consider these concerns as you review FS2017-4, and the campus-wide Committee on Tenure petitions you and recommends that this motion should not be approved. Further, if Motion FS_2017_4 has already been approved, the Committee on Tenure urges you to rescind this Motion because the Council on Core Curriculum and Policies did not follow institutional policies, or act in good faith to work transparently or in consultation with the academic leaders who would be most directly affected by this inappropriate and misguided Motion.