

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

September 30, 2010

In attendance:

Paul Abegg (PA)

Brad Barry (BB)

Robert Carlson (RC) (for Ed Reber)

Jennifer Ciaccio (JC)

Gary Cooper (GC)

Varlo Davenport (VD)

John Goldhardt (JG)

Jerry Harris (sec.) (JH)

Dianne Hirning (DH)

Jie Liu (JL)

Munir Mahmud (MM)

Shane Prine (SP)

Dennis Wignall (DW)

DW: What I've handed out are first principles from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), sent to me by Matt Smith-Lahrman, in response to my request at the general faculty meeting. As these kinds of things come in, I'll make sure you get them, too, to include in your thinking. This is an early meeting, but we have a deadline impending and need to move this forward. We won't have one next week, but yes on the third Thursday of October. We don't have to have a pristine policy; what we submit has to go through committees, but we need to have something moving now.

SP: My understanding was that this post-tenure policy was to be instituted to create/impose professional development opportunities to those that are complacent or whatever. In my department, a question came up: who ultimately is responsible for paying for this?

DW: Administration. It may trickle down to the dean's level, but ultimately the funds will come from the vice-president's office.

RC: In our department, our biggest concern is how to accomplish this when there are two separate tracks: we're constructing a post-tenure policy for faculty, but that doesn't influence the administration's side of things (administration post-tenure review).

DW: Well, the administration side continues as is.

RC: We bring it up because AFT guidelines have their own policy that we're not discussing right now...?

DW: The distinction really is in the pre-tenure review by administration. Once that has been made (that is, tenure has been given), administration has to live by that decision; we (faculty) then just ensure that these people continue to perform at a high level in the classroom.

PA: Probationary faculty that go for tenure are first reviewed by peers, not administration, so it's not solely administration doing that.

DW: Yes, it's a strange situation because a probationary faculty member can be dismissed without cause, regardless of teaching ability. The probationary period is established by college.

PA: Yes, but tenure is still partly determined by peers.

DW: We can participate in that decision, but *post*-decision...it is actually a currency in a way – there's no pay raise involved, but there is value in the sense of being permanent, unable to be dismissed without cause. So it's a shift of burden of proof to administration.

RC: But as long as administration has a separate review system in which we have no say – unless we address that *in addition* to this new policy, what will we accomplish?

GC: We're still just in an advisory role; ultimately, decisions are made by administration.

PA: But a person can appeal a decision by faculty.

GC: But the appeal process can only happen if the review process didn't follow its policy!

DW: The current process, from my point of view, is that faculty can appeal at any stage along the rank & tenure process, but awarding of rank or tenure is made by the president. And s/he doesn't have to justify any decision.

PA: But RC is saying that there's *already* an administration post-tenure review process that we don't control. We can't ignore that and it needs to be part of our decision on a faculty-driven post-tenure policy.

DW: True, but having our own creates a balance of authority. If post-tenure review by administration finds something in the negative, then the burden of proof shifts to faculty member – the member has to defend him/herself.

RC: But the concern I have is: unless we're charged with changing *their* policy, how does our policy mean anything?

DW: This may be why places like the University of Utah includes administrative decisions in post-tenure review. But it says to me: which means the most? Which weighs more heavily? Faculty performance *after* tenure is a faculty matter.

MM: What is that administrative policy? Every 3 years?

PA: Yes, the dean comes every 3 years to your class.

DW: So if a dean without content expertise is doing an evaluation, what is really being evaluated? It isn't about content. Our policy would be *entirely* about content. The difference is that the decision to award tenure has *already* been made, so we have a mechanism to address weaknesses.

SP: Does it also create a line of defense against administration if the faculty member's colleagues give a favorable review?

DW: If the faculty member goes through training to address and identified weaknesses, because tenure has already been rewarded, then there's nothing administration can do to revoke tenure or dismiss the faculty member. Basically, doing so would negate the professionalism of everyone in that department. It creates litigation strength if that ever happens.

MM: In the current administrative policy, they can't take action, can they?

DW: I don't think there is any actual action they can take.

VD: Does anyone have department-level reviews? At all?

DH: We do in the library.

VD: I'm most familiar with USU's process; I could make the argument that the *first* step in all of this is establishing role statements for everyone – without those, we can't evaluate what's getting done by whom.

DH: We basically use job descriptions in the library; I do lots of other things *not* on my job description, so this method is not a good reflection of what any of us do in library. If I were to be graded just on my job description, it wouldn't reflect my performance.

VD: At USU, reviews are done yearly so the job description can be adjusted as necessary. In general, yes, we need post-tenure review, but it feels like we're starting at step 10, not 1. My first question is: *how* are you going to evaluate whether or not I'm doing my job? I did this with most of my faculty; the only documents we have that do this are the job descriptions under which we were hired, but the rubric we constructed carries no weight.

GC: That'd be similar to management by objective.

VD: Yes, but it also breaks down into "teaching," "production," etc. and what percent of time is spent on various duties. We can then negotiate that.

DW: We have a subjective problem when talking about excellence in the classroom – that's a subjective thing. What constitutes that?

GC: That becomes a problem in our current system – if a dean walks in and has an idea of how I should teach, but I do something different yet effective, I get marked off for it.

DW: This is why it's important to have a *faculty-driven* post-tenure review. Then *colleagues* can affirm that a teaching technique is good even if a dean doesn't think so.

RC: But it's still my concern that if *our* policy has no bearing on what administration does, what does it accomplish?

VD: There is some cross-purpose, but post-tenure review is to ensure excellence in teaching and provide a bulwark against administrative action. Did you go through the USU document I sent around? (yes from several) Were there any flaws there? It's really nicely laid out.

DW: Too many others' policies, though, include administration in post-tenure reviews from the faculty perspective.

DH: Not only that, but aren't we also providing opportunities for faculty to develop skills in their areas? It's a gateway to professional development.

DW: Let's clarify: that's part of the administrative post-tenure review, but that mechanism doesn't play out well most of the time. Faculty post-tenure review is a very positive, supportive process, whereas administration's is not necessarily so in all cases. Again, if there's a faculty failure to address weaknesses, that opens the door for administrative post-tenure review to come into play.

JC: If the main issue is that we're acting in a development and support role, and defending a faculty member, then the policy *can't* have any teeth, and the problem becomes that if the faculty member is *not* up to snuff...

DH: That administration's policy has to have the teeth.

RC: But if we say a faculty member is OK and we offered help, and then *administration* gave a bad review, then we are just in a support role...?

DW: Yes, we're providing support for colleagues to overcome problems.

DH: In my limited experience with administrative review, they tell us what's wrong, but give no guidance about how to fix it. That's what I see this policy as trying to accomplish.

GC: It creates a buffer, and we decide if we want to take advantage of it.

DH: It gives faculty members tools.

DW: Some people have said that it would create competition or fracturing of a given department – but if it's presented *throughout* the process as *support* to offset a negative appraisal by administration, it diminishes the chance for that kind of thing. As soon as administration is included in that, it dilutes our influence.

DH: And comingles the administration's role with the faculty's role.

DW: In the post-tenure reviews I've looked at, including AAU's, the faculty-driven policy is *never* punitive; is *always* positive and supportive. The faculty member identified as having an issue can choose to or not to participate in potentially corrective measures, but if s/he doesn't, then it's administration's problem. If I don't address my faculty post-tenure review, and they do a follow up and I'm still not taking advantage of the opportunities given, then the burden of proof is on *my* shoulders against administration.

RC: But there is no alternative.

DW: At the point of my own denial to accept improvement, I give up my safety net.

DH: As a faculty member, if you choose to use your faculty review as a defense, then you can show the steps you took to improve.

GC: That could be problematic for us – if we say a faculty member does a great job, and administration says otherwise...what if administration says you're not doing X, but faculty says you do Y great?

DW: Then I'd say it should fall back on the faculty member's peers, and administration's opinion doesn't carry as much weight – if we didn't identify it as a weakness, administration's concerns are not as important as what we reviewed.

PA: What if we flip-flopped that – what if the faculty member doesn't respond to a bad faculty review, but administration doesn't find out – they won't have the content knowledge necessary to act.

JC: We need to use some other form of evaluation *other* than administrative and peer review – something more intensive.

DW: PA, in the case where the faculty, in a faculty review, finds a weakness, but administration does not identify it, it falls on the department chair to impose a pressure or punitive action, but *not* from faculty themselves.

PA: But the department chair is administration!

DW: At other schools, faculty choose their own chair, but here administration appoints the chair in many cases. Administration still plays heavy role here even if a person is chosen from within.

PA: This policy is being revised, and they want a vote on it by Oct. 15.

DW: We can get this info out to FSEC members. So, OK: this discussion is fruitful – this could go on for weeks and I don't know that we'd make any progress, but please do more thinking, take the AFT document, and I'll try to get more examples and information and send it out by e-mail for responses. Incoming feedback, observations, etc. are very useful, so please continue that dialog. We have some other issues: the parade on Oct. 9. There's no requirement to participate imposed by administration, but it's a request that we should not ignore. There's a variety of options on how we could participate: an adjunct's class came up with some ideas – trying to figure out fun ways to participate. I don't see us in rank & file in procession – it's too formal. On the other hand, I've had an offer from someone in the media department to pay for candy if we threw candy. I have a hunch that this is becoming an individual faculty member and department level decision. So go back to your departments and encourage your faculty to participate and do something distinctive – wear red shirts? Something – think about ways to participate. But I think the president will be sensitive to who is and isn't there. Oh – also, delegation of responsibilities: what PA and I are trying to do is deal with all our pans in the fire – it's too much. We're going to suggest passing on some roles and see who can do what.

VD: Would an assignment allow us to form subcommittees?

DW: Absolutely, and you'll have support to do that.

JC: It doesn't have to consist entirely of other committee members?

DW: No. By having an FSEC member head up a committee, it lends legitimacy to the process and gives a direct tie to the FSEC and through that to whole Senate.

PA: Issues that are currently dealing with include: sick leave policy, textbook policy – we could send out an e-mail with a list of all the issues and solicit interest from members of FSEC.

DW: We'll do that. The only other thing for today is: I get more and more feedback that a \$2/pay period increase in dues has a lot of support.

DH: One of our librarians asked: could we still bring out own lunch and use the extra money from the increase to start scholarship/grant fund for students? She was more interested in giving money back rather than getting a free lunch.

DW: That's a good idea, but the only way to get faculty to participate is the lunches.

MM: In Business, they are fine with a fee increase, but the lunch *has* to come back. Also, they want some kind of monitoring of who gets the lunch.