

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for February 2, 2023

Hybrid Meeting (SU 109 and Zoom Conferencing Software), 3:15 pm

Members in Attendance: S. Alexander, K. Ankem, R. Brice, W. Darnell, J. Elliot, K. Fuegen, R. Gall, P. Hare, J. Herman, W. Herzog, K. Katkin, A. Miller, M. Zacate, M. Nakamura, M. Providenti, H. Riffe, H. Schellhas, J. Washburn-Moses, M. Scola, M. Washington

Guests in Attendance: J. Bloch, M. Cecil, G. Hiles, S. Kim, J. Vest

Members Not in Attendance: B. Green, Y. Kim, L. Manchise, I. Saad

1. Call to Order
 - a) The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm.
2. Approval of the agenda
 - a) There was a request to add a discussion item about post-tenure review.
 - b) The agenda was approved as amended.
3. Approval of the minutes from the January 19.
 - a) The minutes from the January 19, 2023 meeting were approved as distributed.
4. Chair's Report and Announcements
 - a) Faculty Senate meeting
 - Jacqueline Emerine was elected VP of Faculty Senate for next year.
 - Chair of the Board of Regents Rich Boehne was present. He said that the new president must be focused on the business model of higher education, revenues and expenses. He claimed that there was a "fog" during COVID that made it hard to see what was going on. Believes that there is too much fragmentation in university operations. He made no commitment to an open search and no commitment to running search on the academic calendar. He is willing to meet us for coffee.
 - Interim president Bonita Brown was present. She spoke about the need to stabilize the budget. There is a need to improve infrastructure, so that systems communicate effectively. She says there is a need to rebuild community and restore trust. Success by Design continues. She will press the Cabinet to be more visible to the campus community.

- Provost Matt Cecil stated that the new co-chair of the Academic Commons workgroup is Abdou Ndoye. There is a new interim dean in Health and Human Services: Gannon Tagher.
- Reduced 33 FT faculty positions this year. This includes 45 vacant positions. Twelve positions were filled. There will be reductions in NTTT positions and (a few) NTTR positions. Still need to reduce instructional costs by \$3.5 million. Nonetheless, student persistence has been increasing.
- Enterprise NKU is still being rolled out. Tell provost if you have ideas for training opportunities.
- Provost says he will set aside 100K for each year for compression and equity adjustments. However, other aspects of the five by five plan will not be implemented. We don't have the money now.
- Faculty Senate president John Farrar provided another update on the Academic Commons workgroup. He says the focus of academic commons will be on student support. The group is considering who our students are, how demographics are changing, what services we currently offer, and what services we ought to offer. The group is considering what would benefit from being co-located. How do we support all types of students (e.g., adult learners, parents, TRIO, veterans, etc.)? John will bring a preliminary plan to Senate in February. Focused on structure, not details.
- Other issues:
 - Post-tenure review: rumors about bills in Frankfort. [PCC could take this as an opportunity to review the Post-tenure review portion of the Handbook. Is it what we want? Should it be updated? Does it meet the needs of developing faculty?]
 - Workload policy: how do we credit faculty work? [One way of addressing this is on today's agenda: should high-impact teaching practices be considered part of workload?]
 - Protection and support for NTTR faculty. Three-year contracts?
 - Alternative promotion and tenure pathways. Flexible pathways. [Suggestion to allow faculty to select 2 areas of emphasis, e.g. teaching and service or teaching and research while maintaining minimum standards across all areas.]
- New Gen Ed certificate: Transformative thinking for community career: Contact Tonya Krouse for more information.
- The Registrar has agreed to extend the grade submission deadline in 7-week courses by 24 hours. Final grades for the two 7-week sessions this semester will be due the Wednesday following the last day of classes, at 9:00am.
- DISCUSSION:

- Why does the Registrar have so much power over faculty?
- PROVOST: “the Provost supports a 48 hour extension.” There are no good reasons why a 48 hour extension cannot work. By summer we can return to this.
- The Chair of BoR did say he would consider faculty involvement with the presidential search finalists.
- The reason for tenure is academic freedom. If there is no research, there is no tenure.

5. Voting item: RPT processes in multi-disciplinary departments and schools:

BACKGROUND:

In combined departments with only one tenure-line faculty in a given discipline, shall RPT committees be required to include one or more members from other departments? At NKU we have multiple combined departments, e.g. Physics, Geology and Engineering; Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology. One department but multiple disciplines. If there is only one faculty in a given discipline in a department, can that person’s scholarship be accurately evaluated? This is the case in Geology where there is only one tenure-line faculty member. Should the committee contain at least one member of the appropriate rank from within the candidate’s department or, if that’s not possible, can the candidate supply a list of faculty members of appropriate rank from other departments, schools, or colleges with affinity to the candidate’s discipline?

MOTION: Adopt changes to Handbook section 3.2.3 and 3.2.4 as presented in bold in the attached document. Seconded and passed by voice vote.

DISCUSSION:

- The proposal is that the already assembled RPT committee will select the additional member.
- In consultation with the candidate? The proposal includes consultation with department chair or school director, not the candidate.
- The candidate should be involved but that shouldn’t be written into the Handbook. Candidates generally do not have a say about who will be on their RPT committee. There is no reason only these candidates should have a say when no one else does.
- All candidates have input at the beginning of the academic year when they vote on their department’s RPT membership.
- This will happen informally without adding “consultation with the candidate.” From where else but the candidate could the committee get a list of faculty who would be appropriate to serve on their committee?
- PROVOST: Sometimes you just need someone who understands the research methodology. There should be a conversation.

- We could say that it is a right of the candidate to supply a list of names. It is not the right of the candidate to select a committee member. The committee would make the selection.
- How do we clarify the boundaries of disciplines, how narrow is the definition, to know if a candidate's discipline is represented?
- What would be the process of selecting a member from a candidates list?
- The existing policy does not indicate how a candidate from a list would be chosen.
- Define "affinity." Does the case for affinity need to be made with each committee?
- In this specific case, the affinity is *environmental* geology and *environmental* biology. It's the methodology used in environmental sciences. Field scientists versus lab scientists.
- By "affinity" we mean "qualifying expertise to review the substance of the scholarship."
- The Handbook should be broader. "Disciplinary" narrows the focus too much for multi-disciplinary departments.
- We could allow a candidate to make a request for representation of discipline or other types of diversity.
- Open up the possibility for the candidate to request an additional RPT member.
- Proposed modification: "If there is not at least one faculty member of appropriate rank within the candidate's discipline, those faculty initially chosen to serve, in consultation with the department chair or school director **and candidate**, shall prepare a list of tenured faculty members of appropriate rank from other departments, schools, or colleges."
- Proposed modification: Replace "... faculty members in departments or schools with affinity to the applicant's discipline" with "faculty members with specific subject-matter expertise that qualifies them to review the merits of the candidate's scholarly or creative activity."
- Subject-matter versus methodology, is this an issue?
- Member cautions against limiting the statement to scholarly or creative activity. Subject-matter expertise is relevant in teaching.
- Committee agrees to add "teaching" to the proposed modification: "When choosing additional faculty members, preference shall be given to faculty members with specific subject-matter expertise that qualifies them to review the merits of the candidate's teaching and scholarly or creative activity."
- This is only limited to disciplinary diversity. What if someone is the only woman in their department?
- Caution against developing this thinking. The original proposal is to ensure the inclusion of committee members who understand the applicant's work. Gender diversity works against the idea of subject-matter expertise.

Committee diversity should be considered with the original establishment of the committee but not at this stage.

- The greater issue here is anti-bias training.
- Shouldn't the committee composition be the same for every candidate in a given year in a department?
- There would still be at least 5 members from the candidate's department.
- Clarification needed about "The RPT committee will fill its membership by appointing faculty from this list." If there isn't subject-matter expertise among the 5, then there will need to be a 6th member.
- 3.2.3 is about the original composition of the committee. Maybe the proposal should be in 3.2.4?
- The proposed change to 3.2.3 is now:

"In departments and schools that include multiple disciplines, the committee must include at least one faculty member of appropriate rank within the candidate's discipline. If there is not at least one faculty member of appropriate rank within the candidate's discipline, those faculty initially chosen to serve, in consultation with the candidate and the department chair or school director, shall prepare a list of tenured faculty members of appropriate rank from other departments, schools, or colleges. When choosing additional faculty members, preference shall be given to faculty members with specific subject-matter expertise that qualifies them to review the merits of the candidate's teaching and scholarly or creative activity. The addition of a faculty member will augment the size of the committee."

This proposed change will begin a new paragraph.

- Question: With six members, how would a tie be decided? Answer: A tie is a positive recommendation (Handbook, 3.2.6).
- Motion and second to approve changes to 3.2.3 and 3.2.4 as amended. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. Discussion item: Should courses featuring high-impact teaching practices (e.g., course numbers ending in x92, x95, x96, x97, or x99) be considered part of workload.

a) Tabled.

7. Discussion item: Are there concerns regarding the Research, Grants, and Contracts office?

a) Tabled.

8. Other Business

DISCUSSION:

- The Chair of the BoR did say he would consider faculty involvement when candidates are invited to campus.
- The idea of tenure for teaching and service – if there is no scholarship or creative activity, there is no tenure.
- Scholarship and creative activity are not under consideration for removal from faculty evaluations.
- There was an article in the Chronicle this week about awarding tenure for teaching but this is not something being considered at NKU.

9. Adjournment (4:34pm)

Submitted,
M. Providenti, Secretary

13. FACULTY WORKLOAD POLICY

13.1. GENERAL

The credit hour is the recognized standard by which faculty teaching load is measured. The traditional twelve (12) semester credit hours is the maximum required undergraduate teaching load for all full-time tenure-track faculty. Individual departments/schools may propose their own credit hour equivalencies and reassigned-time policies. Such policies must be in writing and must be approved by a majority of the tenure-track departmental/school faculty, the chair/school director, the appropriate dean, and the provost. In colleges where there is no department or school, the dean will function as department chair in these processes and approval must be given by a majority of the tenure-track faculty in the college. Regardless of external funding for research or other grant activities, faculty will normally teach a minimum of 50% time in a given academic year. The provost may grant exceptions to this policy on a semester-by-semester basis.

3.2. PROCEDURES FOR DECISIONS ON REAPPOINTMENT, PROMOTION, AND TENURE

3.2.3. Departmental/School Committee

Each department or school, or in the case of School of the Arts (SOTA), program, shall have a reappointment, promotion, and tenure (hereinafter, RPT) committee consisting of at least five tenured faculty members elected at a regular or special department or school faculty meeting. If necessary, a separate committee may be formed to consider promotion to Professor. Each department or school, or, in the case of SOTA, program, committee must have the same membership in a given year, with the exception of additional external members (see Section 3.2.4). Additionally, for promotion committees, these five faculty members must be at least one rank above the level of the applicants.

The RPT committee shall be formed from faculty within the department or school, if five or more tenured faculty of appropriate rank are available to serve. If there are not enough faculty members of appropriate rank available to form a committee of five, those faculty initially chosen to serve, in consultation with the department chair or school director, shall prepare a list of tenured faculty of appropriate rank from other departments, schools, or colleges. **In departments and schools that include multiple disciplines, the committee must include at least one faculty member of appropriate rank within the candidate's discipline. If there is not at least one faculty member of appropriate rank within the candidate's discipline, those faculty initially chosen to serve, in consultation with the department chair or school director, shall prepare a list of tenured faculty members of appropriate rank from other departments, schools, or colleges.** When choosing additional faculty members, preference shall be given to faculty members in departments or schools with affinity to the applicant's **discipline** ~~department or school~~. The RPT committee will fill its membership by appointing faculty from this list.

The members of the committee shall elect their own chair. The committee chair shall notify the department chair or school director of committee membership within ten working days of election.

3.2.4. Departmental/School **Committee**: Eligibility

All full-time, tenure-track faculty in the department or school are eligible to vote to elect the committee membership. Only tenured faculty may serve on the committee. The department chair or school director may not serve on the committee. Department chairs or school directors in other departments or schools may serve on the committee provided that they are in a different college. Assistant and associate deans with faculty appointments serving as administrators with reassigned time may serve on the committee provided that they are serving as administrators in a different college. Tenured faculty with appointments in more than one department/school or discipline may serve on the committee of any department/school or discipline in which they hold an appointment. Faculty on sabbatical or paid leave are eligible but not required to serve on the committee. Faculty on unpaid leave are not eligible to serve on the committee. The Faculty Senate President will not serve on a department/school RPT committee unless there are fewer than five eligible faculty members available, in which case the Faculty Senate President can serve but will not chair the committee.

Upon agreement of RPT committee members, the department chair or school director, the appropriate dean, and the applicant, faculty external to the **department/school or** University and of suitable rank and tenure may serve as an additional member on the committee. Persons holding full-time administrative appointments, as defined in Section 1.8.1, are not eligible to serve on the committee.

In departments or schools where no faculty members are eligible to serve on a needed RPT committee, the department or school faculty shall serve in place of the department or school committee members to elect suitable RPT committee members.