

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for January 19, 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, P. Hare, J. Herman, W. Herzog, K. Katkin, Y. Kim, A. Miller, N. Mihindikulasooriya, M. Nakamura, M. Providenti, H. Riffe, H. Schellhas, J. Washburn-Moses, M. Scola, M. Washington

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

Members Not in Attendance: R. Gall, B. Green, L. Manchise, I. Saad

1. Call to Order
 - a) The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm.
2. Approval of the agenda
 - a) The agenda was approved as distributed.
3. Approval of the minutes from the December 1.
 - a) The minutes from the December 1, 2022 meeting were approved as distributed.
4. Chair's Report and Announcements
 - a) Faculty Senate meeting
 - The provost thanked the faculty for our efforts. Fall to spring retention is 86%.
 - Nonetheless, spring enrollment is lower than spring enrollment one year ago.
 - The director of admissions has resigned. He had been at NKU just one semester. There are questions about why he left and whether he will be replaced.
 - The Senate discussed proposed amendments to the Senate constitution. One amendment would have granted representation for part-time faculty on Senate. There was a motion to strike this change. The motion passed. Another amendment would have granted officers of the Senate a vote on Senate even if they were not Senators. There was a motion to strike this change. The motion passed. There was a lot of discussion regarding the role of the faculty advocate. Though the faculty advocate is an officer of the Senate, the faculty advocate is not elected in the same way as other officers. Officers are elected by the Senate. The faculty advocate is elected by the General Faculty. As such, the faculty advocate represents the faculty. There was a motion to grant the faculty advocate a vote on Senate. This motion passed.
 - Other changes to the Constitution:

- Full-time librarians employed in faculty positions are part of the General Faculty.
- Independent academic programs may elect an additional representative to UCC. (For other committees, each department or school gets one representative.)
- The elections committee shall have a member from each college, and shall preside over all elections sponsored by the Senate.
- I presented two items that the PCC voted to approve last semester. The first item concerns the confidentiality of discussions with the faculty advocate. The second item concerns nepotism in the RPT process. There was a suggestion that the paragraph on nepotism reference the values and ethical responsibilities policy. Also recommended was the insertion of “former and current” spouses of faculty under review should not be permitted participate at any level in the RPT process.

b) Board of Regents meetings

- The board has met twice this month. During its first meeting, the board decided whether the interim president would be permitted to apply for the permanent position. The majority voted no, including our faculty regent. Yesterday, the board announced that Bonita Brown would serve as the interim president.
- Notably, 34 tenure-line faculty applied for the voluntary separation incentive. This is more than was anticipated. Not everyone who applied is eligible. Currently, the deans are calculating how much money would be saved if a given faculty member left NKU.
- Notably, one of the regents requested an analysis of the costs associated with accelerated online programs. PCC could issue a statement.

c) DISCUSSION:

- Why did the BoR vote to not allow the interim to apply for the permanent position? Maybe because the interim has a JD and has not served as a dean or provost? The interim would have an unfair advantage in a wider search. The decision was probably not about the current interim but another possible internal candidate, someone who wouldn't take the position unless they would be favored in the search.
- What if the interim is really good? We need a clean and open search for a new president. Faculty have less input when interims are transitioned to permanent positions.
- The cost of accelerated online programs will be difficult to calculate as many faculty who teach AP also teach traditional courses. PCC could bullet point issues with AP that go beyond money, e.g. accreditation issues.

- So far, the BoR has not committed to an open search for president. The faculty need to keep pressure on for open search.
- BoR chair and the interim president will attend Senate in January.
- Nothing was said at BoR about Academic Commons. AC Committee is meeting January – February with a report due in March.

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

- a) 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?

BACKGROUND:

NKU has combined departments like Physics-Geology-Engineering Tech, Sociology-Anthropology-Philosophy, Political Science-Criminal Justice-Organizational Leadership. Geology has one tenure line and works closely with Biological Sciences, teaching required courses for Biological Sciences and is mentored by faculty in Biological Sciences. As there will be fewer tenure lines in the future, this situation will only increase. We want to ensure faculty in the RPT process are reviewed by people who are familiar with their discipline even if they are in a different department.

- b) Does the existing policy regarding department and school committees meet the needs of faculty in schools with clusters?

BACKGROUND:

The shift from departments to schools weakens the faculty. For example, Informatics is moving from 3 departments to 2 schools which would lessen the number of senators from 3 to 2.

DISCUSSION:

- There is a trade off. By reducing the number of administrators, departments are combined and senate becomes smaller. However, if we retain administrators, the number of faculty will be reduced. It is more important to retain faculty.
- Informatics has a proposal to create RPT committees based on “clusters” – “clusters” is not defined in the Handbook.
- A cluster is a program.
- SOTA has 3 programs and is named as an exception in the Handbook, Informatics is using SOTA as an example in this early draft.
- In Informatics the plan is to have 3 tenured faculty from the candidate’s cluster and 1 from each of the other 2 clusters. Because Business Informatics (once in Business, now in Informatics) is being absorbed into Computing and Analytics, this could affect accreditation. The RPT

guidelines for Business Informatics are more like Business than Computing. This plan is dean driven, not faculty driven. It needs to be faculty driven. If additional RPT members are needed, faculty want to be able to choose to be evaluated by Business faculty.

- Senate could solicit proposals from faculty from these new units about how they want to be represented in Senate. SOTA did this and there are senators from Music and Art even though those are no longer departments. Informatics could send a proposal to PCC and Senate.
- We could stick to the Handbook language (department and schools) and Informatics could determine how its RPT process can fit the existing Handbook.
- There is reluctance to carve out exceptions for different schools and departments.
- Let's compare the proposal in Informatics to the current Handbook.
- "Cluster" is not an official term, "program" might be a better term.
- Informatics could use the "SOTA Model" for RPT. Each program could choose the number of committee members they would need. 4-5 members from a program but at least one member from another program should participate.
- Informatics isn't necessarily unique in this. On professor committees, the chair has to keep multiple RPT guidelines in front of them for different non-aligned disciplines.
- Committee members from outside a discipline can interpret the guidelines from the candidate's discipline. But what if the entire committee is outside the candidate's discipline? There needs to be someone on the committee who understands the discipline.
- We need a mechanism in the Handbook for when the administration does and administrative reorganization creating new organizational structures. This can go to Senate to reorganize the RPT process without having to amend the Handbook. The affected faculty should bring something before Senate to propose how they would like RPT to work within the new structure. The process should be proposed by faculty, arbitrated by Senate.
- PCC's proposed language says to include a faculty member of appropriate rank from the candidate's discipline.
- This should be addressed at the college level, within the department. If the college proposes something fundamentally different than the Handbook, the proposal needs to go to Senate.
- There is no reason tenure-track faculty should not be involved in the development of RPT policy.
- The SOTA policies that are serving as a model were not voted on by faculty. SOTA was given a model. The Program Head Handbook replaced what the Chair did. There was going to be a vote but the faculty were not

in support, so there was no vote. These policies have serious flaws, faculty were not a part of their development, and now they are being built upon. RPT committees used to pull members from a discipline but now its 3 members from the discipline and others from the school. The faculty from outside a discipline are often uncomfortable and defer to faculty within the candidate's discipline. This model is based on cost saving, not pedagogy. There is not collaboration across disciplines as a part of the curriculum.

- The faculty were not a part of selecting a director of the School of Arts, this was an appointment by the dean.
- Since RPT committee members from outside a discipline tend to defer, why not just shrink the size of the committees?
- We could eliminate the requirement that committee members need to be one rank above or higher than the candidate. This is the case at some of our benchmark institutions.
- 2 PCC members voiced opposition to eliminating the rank above requirement in the previous comment. For example, faculty who are not full professors may not understand the requirements at the rank of full professor. Also, there is a risk of corruption ("I'll vote for you if you vote for me").
- A lower rank person could serve on the RPT committee as ex officio to help them better understand the process.
- If assistant professors were involved in the process, there would be less ambiguity, less uncertainty, about the requirements for RPT.
- Can faculty in phased retirement participate? Currently, no.
- Look at proposed revision to Handbook 3.2.3.
- If there are no other tenured faculty members in a discipline, there is a mechanism by which faculty external to the university can serve on an RPT committee.
- The term discipline is a gray area. Needs to be defined.
- If a candidate wants someone from their discipline on their committee, they should have that choice. But, without that being mandatory, that puts the burden on that candidate and could create a power dynamic issue.
- In the current procedure, tenured faculty in collaboration with the chair or director would develop the list of potential additional committee members.
- This issue will become more common with faculty lines being reduced and more combined departments. The goal is to ensure that candidates are fairly evaluated by peers who recognize excellence in their discipline. There should be at least one person of appropriate rank from the candidate's discipline and it shouldn't be left to the candidate to make

the argument about why they should be evaluated by members of their discipline.

- In upcoming meetings PCC should discuss the reduction in tenure/tenure-track faculty. Funds from unfilled tenure track lines are shifting to NTT lines.

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) This item has been tabled.

7. Discussion item: Research Grants and Contracts office

a) Ask the faculty from your department if they have had experiences or problems concerning RGC to bring forward.

8. Adjournment (4:32pm)

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.

Commented [NM1]: It is not clear if the one person of related discipline must be one of the five or is in addition to the five...
Should it be one of the five?