

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for October 3, 2024

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

Members in Attendance: Deborah Amend, Amanda Brockman, Whitney Darnell, Gina Fieler, Kathleen Fuegen, Shannon Fredrick, Roxanne Gall, Jaesook Gilbert, Rich Gilson, Patrick Hare, Rachelle Janning, Ken Katkin, Alexis Miller, Makoto Nakamura, Joe Nolan, Tamara O'Callaghan, Michael Providenti, Kathleen Quinn, Holly Riffe (Chair), Ihab Saad, Amal Said, Gang Sun, Emily Taylor, Jessica Taylor, Maggie Whitson

Guests in Attendance: Janel Bloch, Jacqueline Emerine, Grace Hiles, Suk-hee Kim, Provost Diana McGill, Steve Slone

Members Not in Attendance: Jered Moses, Jamie Strawn

1. Call to Order, Adoption of the Agenda
 - The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm. The agenda was adopted as distributed.
2. Adoption of the minutes from the September 19, 2024 meeting
 - The September 19 minutes were adopted as distributed.
3. Chair's Report and Announcements
 - All three voting items from the last PCC meeting were voted on and passed in the Faculty Senate meeting on 9/30/2024. The corrected drafts will be sent to Senate President Emerine this week.
 - Updates from Senate: the enrollment is up 411 students. The budget is as good as it can be.
4. Voting/Discussion item: 3.2.3 RPT policy update as schools merge
 - **BACKGROUND:** The proposed policy is coming from the College of Informatics new School of Computing and Analytics (Informatics also has a School of Media) and it essentially allows schools with multiple programs to have more than one RPT Committee. This would also apply to SOTA, hence the references to SOTA in Handbook 3.2.3 have been removed. Having additional NKU faculty on a department's RPT committee related to the applicant's discipline passed PCC last year and is in the Handbook.
 - **DISCUSSION:**
 - The way the current policy reads, if a department can only have one RPT committee, it is possible that there could be no one from the candidate's discipline on the RPT committee. There was an opinion that it is not desirable to only have one RPT committee for a school and the Handbook should allow for more than one.

- There was concern raised that this proposed language could create a cause for appeal if a candidate requests a committee that is solely made up of faculty from their discipline.
 - There wouldn't be cause for appeal as long as the committees are fully functioning.
- Concern was raised that the proposed language, due to the wording of the parenthetical phrase in the first sentence, that this would apply only to schools and not to departments that contain multiple disciplines.
- The following language that was added to 3.2.3 within the past 2 years and may address some concerns: *"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."*
- There was a suggestion to change the word "a" to "one or more" in the first sentence of the proposal: "... shall have a reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) committee ..." becomes "... shall have one or more reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) committees ..."
- Who decides if there will be an additional committee? ANSWER: The candidate can make a request to add an additional RPT committee member from their discipline but the candidate does not choose who it will be. There are some programs that cannot have fully functioning committees without other members from other disciplines. Some departments have too few faculty members.
- In the College of Business, accounting, finance, and economics merged into one department. There is currently only one RPT committee for the department but there are enough faculty to have multiple committees. It would be a benefit to have multiple RPT committees within the department.
- Handbook 3.2.3 could have the "one or more" language and details for how this would work could be included in departmental guidelines.
- It should be made clear how the number of RPT committees is selected. The suggestion is that the Handbook should indicate this will be determined by faculty vote within a unit.
- What if a department has 10 faculty from one discipline, 3 faculty from another, and 3 faculty from a third? Only candidates from the department with 10 faculty could have a committee completely comprised of people from their own discipline. Is this OK? ANSWER: That situation would appear to be the least bad option.
- Suggestion to carve out exceptions as was done for SOTA. Units could bring the request for exceptions to PCC. There would be the disadvantage

of needing to continually edit this part of the Handbook. This approach could prevent unintended repercussions that might be introduced in a general statement.

- Suggestion to not define Handbook exceptions program by program, especially in the context of reorganizations not driven by faculty. The goal should be to decentralize this process and for departments to be specific in their departmental guidelines.
- Add a phrase “decided by an election in the units.”
- Suggestion to add “one or more reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) committees as determined by unit guidelines. consisting An RPT committee will consist of ...”
- Does this create an unfair advantage when some candidates can have all discipline specialists and some would not? ANSWER: It’s already that way now. It is fair and the ability have multiple committees would restore the status quo from a couple years ago, before administrative reorganizations, to allow departmental committees that would include faculty from the candidate’s discipline. There is no legitimate fairness argument (would some candidates want fewer committee members who could understand their disciplinary work? Could a candidate in Geology ever have 5 geologists on their committee?).
- Suggestion to change “unit” to “department, school, program, or college.”
- Regarding the history of this idea, after the reorganization into a school, SOTA wanted three RPT committees: one for visual arts, one for theater, and one for music. What they ended up with was one committee that had 3 members from the candidate’s discipline and one member from each of the other two disciplines.
- **MOTION** to accept the revisions to Handbook section 3.2.3 as amended. Seconded.
 - Discussion: Can this go back to the departments for feedback?
 - **ACTION:** Discussion will continue in the next meeting. The revised language will be shared by the PCC chair so that representatives can take it to their departments.

5. Voting item: Human Subjects Policy 16.6

- **BACKGROUND:** The proposal is to remove the procedures from the policy and only retain the actual policy in the Faculty Handbook.
- **DISCUSSION:**
 - The Research Grants and Contracts website includes the policy with references to the IRB and training. By removing the content in this policy from the Handbook, PCC is not indicating that the material being removed is inappropriate or useless. It is simply being moved from the Handbook to the RGC website.

- Removing something out of the Handbook and giving the administration control over it is appropriate if we want to ensure our policy is aligned with federal regulations and HHS. But that doesn't mean we couldn't have higher standards and we may eventually want to put some of this back into the Handbook.
- PROVOST: If the faculty want the university policy to have a higher standard, anyone can propose that change to the university policy.
- The process for human subjects research and IRB is already pretty stringent and already takes a lot of work and time to comply with. Suggestion to not make this even more difficult and time consuming.
- **MOTION** to vote to accept the revision to the Human Subjects Policy 16.6 as distributed. Seconded.
 - **VOTE:** Motion carried by voice vote without opposition.

6. Voting and Discussion item: 3.2.15 Candidate Clarification during RPT Process

- **BACKGROUND:** This would be a new section in the Handbook. This would give an RPT candidate the opportunity to point out an error or clarify an issue brought up in a letter at a preceding level.
- **DISCUSSION:**
 - The addition to 3.2.5 was described as a “wolf in wolf’s clothing.” It would allow a candidate to go behind a committee’s back and put material into the dossier that the RPT committee would never be aware of and could never respond to. This could become the basis for an administrator to overturn the recommendation of the committee. This would undermine the committee process.
 - This sort of correction is what a reconsideration is for.
 - About the history of this proposed addition: the error the candidate wanted corrected was minor and was accompanied by a positive recommendation from the committee.
 - Seems like a candidate should be able to request a committee to make a correction.
 - Educational Leadership has guidelines that may address this issue in their department Handbook. The guidelines provide the opportunity to request a meeting with the RPT chair for clarification or to request changes. Some other departments have this as part of reconsideration to be addressed at the end of the process.
 - Currently the NKU Handbook only addresses reconsideration after a negative recommendation. There is a suggestion to look at the guidelines from Educational Leadership and to consider including some aspects of that in the university guidelines.
 - There should be a role for reconsideration even in a positive recommendation if it includes a factual error. But that correction should go back to the RPT committee, not as written in the proposal, to the next

level of consideration. Suggestion to revise the section of the Handbook regarding reconsideration.

- If this proposal moves forward it needs to be made clear the need for a correction would not extend the calendar.
- **MOTION** to call the proposal to modify Handbook section 3.2.15 as written to a vote. Seconded.
 - **VOTE:** The motion failed to carry: 2 voting in favor, 17 voting against.
 - **ACTION:** The Educational Leadership representative will share their departmental guidelines with the PCC chair for discussion.

7. New Business

- There was a request to address the new Faculty Benefit Award Guidelines and the timeline with which they were introduced in the workshops. Also, the new guidelines are not equitable for all disciplines (the process for applying comes from STEM – the SMART evaluation system is difficult for someone in creative writing to use).
- The Strategic Planning meeting planned for the Friday before fall break is problematic – too little lead time, faculty are away, and 7-week grades are due.
- It has taken too long to get approval for job adds to run job searches.

- All three of the new business item requests were forwarded to the Faculty Senate President for consideration at Faculty Senate, not PCC.

8. Adjournment (4:30pm)

Submitted,
M. Providenti, Secretary