

Professional Concerns Committee

Minutes for October 17, 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, Holly Riffe (Chair), Ihab Saad, Amal Said, Emily Taylor, Jessica Taylor, Michael Washington, Maggie Whitson

Guests in Attendance: Janel Bloch, Grace Hiles, Provost Diana McGill, Steve Slone, Jason Vest

Members Not in Attendance: Jered Moses, Jamie Strawn, Gang Sun

1. Call to Order, Adoption of the Agenda
 - The meeting was called to order at 3:15pm.
 - Two motions were offered: the first motion was to change the research misconduct discussion from a discussion item to a voting item. The second motion was to make the research misconduct issue the first, not the second item on this agenda.
 - DISCUSSION:
 - One department will not meet until next week and they'd like to discuss the research misconduct in their faculty meeting before a vote in PCC.
 - VOTE: the first motion was voted down.
 - VOTE: the second motion carried.
2. Adoption of the minutes from the October 3, 2024 meeting
 - The October 3 minutes were adopted as distributed.
3. Chair's Report and Announcements
 - The vote on 3.2.3 was delayed to this meeting to give people more time to take the matter back to their departments. Keep in mind that delaying a matter for additional discussion is always an option.
4. Discussion Research Misconduct policy
 - BACKGROUND: NKU had a Research Misconduct Policy since at least 1999, possibly since the original Faculty Handbook. Part of the Research Misconduct Policy was taken away, against the vote of Faculty Senate to retain it, in 2019 by a vote of the Board. This is the only time in the past 25 years the Board rejected a recommendation of Faculty Senate on an academic policy. Faculty Senate recommended maintaining the status quo against a change proposed by administrators. The purpose of the change was to redefine some misconduct as not misconduct to shield President Vaidya from accusations of research

misconduct. In 2002, 5 faculty members in Economics and Finance were terminated for research misconduct (they had untenured faculty publish articles in obscure journals which would later be republished in other obscure journals with updated titles and other authors to build their vitas). A faculty peer hearing committee was empaneled. A recommendation was sent to the Board that these faculty be terminated and the Board agreed. When President Vaidya was hired after a closed or “secret” search, his dossier was forwarded to the department of Economics and Finance so he could be appointed to their faculty. The department found two kinds of fraud: some articles listed in the Vitae were cited in journals that did not exist; four of the articles did exist but were substantially the same article with a co-author and different titles. The new Chair of NKU’s Economics and Finance department presented the evidence in detail to PCC and Senate. The provost’s office at the time, in response, called for changes to the Research Misconduct Policy including the removal of the prohibition against self-plagiarism and added a 6-year statute of limitations. PCC’s recommendations regarding this are in the 10/19/19 minutes. President Vaidya offered his own recommendation to the Board which the Board approved countermanding the PCC and Faculty Senate votes. The current Provost and General Council have indicated support for returning to the original Research Misconduct Policy.

- DISCUSSION of proposed research misconduct changes:
 - Would these changes require faculty to retain records and data indefinitely? ANSWER: This revision to the Research Misconduct Policy would not alter the Data Retention Policy in any way. If the issue is data fabrication, that is addressed elsewhere in the Handbook, not in the Research Misconduct Policy. Data only needs to be preserved as long as the Data Retention Policy prescribes. However, if the evidence of research misconduct is in the publications themselves, the evidence never gets stale.
 - Suggestion to review Duke University’s study on “text recycling” and to update the terminology (self-plagiarism is no longer the terminology in current use). The standards for text recycling vary from department to department. The study showed that text recycling accusations are most often levied against faculty of color.
 - The standards are different in different disciplines and this is explicit in 16.7.2.5 of the old Handbook: *“a serious deviation from accepted scholarly practices must be resolved by applying the standards and norms of the particular academic discipline at issue. Research practices that are generally accepted within an NKU member’s scholarly field cannot be deemed misconduct under this definition.”*
 - Many concerns were raised about the differences in standards between disciplines. A suggestion was made to frontload the statement found in the old 16.7.2.5 that the standards are set by each separate discipline according to their standard accepted practices.

- A suggestion was made to not return to the old language but to take this as an opportunity to bring the language up to date for this revision.
- Part of the problem with the hiring of President Vaidya was secrecy and that an RPT committee to look at his materials was not included. We also need to make other recommendations about how administrators are hired.
 - There was an amendment to the Handbook, supported by Provost Ott Rowlands, that required administrators with faculty rank to be appointed to the faculty by a faculty committee. However, administrators did not follow this part of the Handbook. This is an important but different issue.
- The danger that we face in the next 1-2 decades will be using AI without attribution to generate academic research. This is not addressed in this policy.
- We shouldn't wait to sort out how to deal with AI to make these revisions. And the term "self-plagiarism" is not in the proposed Handbook revision so there is no need to revise it to "text recycling."
- There are only three proposed changes to the Handbook:
 - The first revision reinstates the language about substantially recycling of materials in redundant publications;
 - The second revision says we have to use the applicable substantive standards of the academic discipline at issue; and
 - The third revision removes the statute of limitations for research misconduct but explicitly states that it does not affect the Data Retention Policy.
- J. Vest: We urgently need guidelines around AI and research misconduct. In the Student Academic Honor Code, for example, AI was added to the existing policy as an additional example.
- An article at Duke.edu describes 4 types of text recycling: developmental recycling (reusing content from a grant proposal or conference poster into a journal article) is generally OK; generative recycling (parts of a published piece are used to create a new piece) may be OK depending on the situation; adaptive publishing (translating one's published research into another language) may be OK; and duplicate publishing (republishing something that has already been published) which is the focus of these proposed Handbook revisions. There appears to be consensus that duplicate publishing is wrong. However, there is a lot of nuance regarding this issue.
- We need to be careful about how we limit AI to not remove the advantages it may provide.
- ACTION: Take this back to your departments. In the next meeting, PCC will vote on the three amendments (this does not include language about AI at this time). Amendment 1 is section 16.7.2.5; amendment 2 is 16.7.2.5; and amendment 3 is 16.7.2.4. The documents are in Canvas.

5. Discussion/Voting item: RPT policy as schools merge

- DISCUSSION:

- Suggestion that the changes to how RPT is handled should be made at the level of department, college, or school policies.
- Suggestion to remove the mention of SOTA from the current Handbook language as an exception and talk about school, program, department, college guidelines instead.
- Starting to do carve outs seems like a bad idea. In the case of a department with 2 disciplines, there was support to have the possibility to have 2 committees. This would be defined in departmental guidelines.
- Request for the Provost's perspective: Departments and schools have different guidelines for the composition of RPT committees but they are still required to comply with the Faculty Handbook. Currently there is flexibility in how the committees are composed – the Handbook requires 5 members but the departments determine what their 5 looks like. But multiple committees are not currently supported by the Handbook. Many departments have multiple disciplines and departments have always been fine with one committee. But schools are different than a department and would like different committees for different programs. The faculty need to decide what they want and put that in the Handbook.
- The committee of the whole could solve the problem. We could put that in the Handbook but it may not be necessary since the Handbook only specifies that the committee can be no less than 5 faculty members with no upper limit. If every single tenured faculty member is always on the committee, the committees could form subcommittees with the right disciplinary knowledge. The subcommittees would submit a report to the committee of the whole and then the whole committee would vote.
 - Concern that this would increase workload since some faculty have years in which they serve and years in which they don't serve.
- The problem with departments that contain very different disciplines is that neither department can judge the work of faculty in the other.
- The departments with disciplines that have enough people to have separate committees want separate committees.
- There are options: name specific schools that will have multiple committees (i.e., SOTA, computing and analytics) or committee of the whole (review the 3.2.3 proposal)
- ACTION: This will be an ongoing discussion item. Take this matter back to your departments.

6. New Business

- None at this time.

7. Adjournment (4:39pm)

Commented [MP1]: If the meeting started promptly at 3:15 (84 minutes total).

Submitted,
M. Providenti, Secretary

