

Motion (submitted by James Goldstein, Senator for English): to delete 3.7.2 (Annual Tenure Review) from the *Faculty Handbook*

Background

The Phase II Faculty Handbook (FH-II) approved by the University Senate on May 1, 2012 incorporated for the first time a requirement that tenured faculty must annually review the progress towards tenure of all non-tenured tenure track faculty. The procedures are left up to individual units. **This policy was not included in the summary of changes that was presented to the Senate.**

Neither the Senate leadership nor the Faculty Handbook Committee could provide me any background to the origin of the policy. My examination of the Senate Archives revealed that the origin of annual tenure review dates to 2003, when Dr. William Walker was President and Dr. John Pritchett was Provost. At the Senate meeting of 4 March 2003, Provost Pritchett described the annual tenure review as “simply an administrative guideline,” in contrast to a policy (see link below). During this Senate discussion there were objections to Dr. Pritchett’s characterization of the memo to department heads/chairs, but there was no motion or Senate action at the time. The policy therefore bypassed formal Senate approval at this early stage.

The policy continued to be described as a “guideline” on the Provost’s website (see link below). FH-II was supposed to “capture” existing policies that resided outside of the FH. When this “guideline” was incorporated in the FH-II it became a matter of policy.

Such a significant change in policies governing the process of tenure and promotion should be discussed and acted on by the Senate. The Senate has had no such opportunity for such deliberations, except in the technical sense that it unwittingly approved the policy when the entire FH-II was approved on 1 May 2012.

Main Arguments against the Policy

- No meaningful review of candidates' annual progress toward tenure can take place in the absence of data on *all* the FH criteria for tenure and promotion;
- The c.v. provides no information about teaching success;
- Providing a broader range of data equivalent to that of a third-year review would make the procedure unmanageable for units that have a large number of junior faculty;
- The department head/chair already conducts an annual review based on all the available data, including peer reviews of teaching, student teaching evaluations, copies of publications, etc.
- All academic units have recently clarified their standards for tenure and promotion, making unnecessary an annual procedure by which tenured faculty make judgments about progress towards tenure.

In short, annual tenure review is a waste of faculty effort at best and potentially misleading to junior faculty at worst. **The burden of proof should rest with those who believe that annual tenure review in any form is a good policy.**

Links

Senate, Minutes (4 March 2003)

www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/website/minutes/2002_2003/min_3_4_2003.html

Provost, "Annual Tenure Review Guidelines" (revised May 6, 2009)

www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/policies/Annual_Tenure_Review_Guidelines.html