

January 25, 2010

Dear Drs. Minks, McMillan, Scoufos, Gaster, Mawer, and Clark,

In the fall of 2008, department chairs were notified by the Administration that the criteria and indicators in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual were to be used for all tenure and promotion decisions. Moreover, any tenure and promotion criteria guidelines that had been developed and used by departments were to be discontinued. This change was made without explanation to or consultation with the faculty, and is therefore inconsistent with the spirit and practice of shared governance.*

The Policies that had been developed by the individual departments served to “operationalize” the criteria for tenure and promotion (i.e. the policies were consistent with Policies and Procedures) and to give more clarity and specificity than those included in the Manual. This served the dual purpose of informing junior faculty of what was expected of them, and providing tenure and promotion committees with specific guidelines on which to base their decisions.

The Faculty Senate objects to this unilateral move on the part of the Administration. We will be working on guidelines for development of tenure and promotion policies by the academic departments; policies that are consistent with the faculty’s role and responsibilities in shared governance, with the University’s policies and procedures, and with sensitivity to disciplinary and departmental distinctives. We welcome and look forward to communication with the Administration as we pursue this task.

*The following section of the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual is cited as support for our contention that the administrative decisions on tenure and promotion guidelines are not consistent with the practice or principles of shared governance.

3.7.4 Role of the Faculty

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas of curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board. Budgets, personnel limitations, the time element, and the policies of other groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution may set limits to realization of faculty advice.

The faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in programs, determines when the requirements have been met, and recommends to the president and board the granting of the degrees.

Faculty status and related matters are primarily faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal. The primary responsibility of the faculty for such matters is based upon the fact that its judgment is central to general educational policy. Furthermore, scholars in a particular field or activity have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues: in such competence it is implicit that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments. Likewise, there is the more general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees having a broader charge. Determinations in these matters should first be by faculty action through established procedures, reviewed by the chief academic officers with the concurrence of the board. The governing board and president should, on questions of faculty status as in other matters where the faculty has a primary responsibility, concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.

The faculty should actively participate in the determination of policies and procedures governing salary increases.

Respectfully,

Faculty Senate, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

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