

Personnel Policies Committee
Meeting minutes 4/3/2024

Members in attendance:

Sarah Morrison
Stan Alluisi
Ian Gerg
Frank Xu
Chris Moretti
Laura Atchley
Amy Gantt

Members absent:

Jennifer Anderson

Meeting called to order at 3:02 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to make a plan to address the following committee charge, ranked #2 priority (out of 10) for the 2023-24 school year:

The committee will compare policy with practice in the designation of department chairs across departments, and consider whether changes are warranted

Prior to the meeting, Chair Cotter-Lynch shared the current APPM policy, and a rough draft highlighting some potential areas of concern or lack of clarity.

Senator Morrison asked for historical context on this issue. Senators shared that adherence to current policy has been very erratic, especially in the matter of chair evaluation. Senator Alluisi shared that in nearly 20 years as department chair, he has never had a formal evaluation.

A general discussion ensued about the mechanisms for enforcement of policy, and whether it is worthwhile to rewrite a policy that seems often ignored (if we write a new one, will that also be ignored?).

The possibility of mandatory rotation of chairs was brought up, pros and cons discussed, and the idea deemed undesirable for our university.

Several areas of the current policy for the selection of chairs were flagged for concern:

- Step 4 of 4.10.3, regarding departmental nomination, seems unclear
- Re: 4.10.3, the concern was raised of what is the procedure if departmental faculty cannot come to majority agreement on a proposed chair?

- Re: 4.10.4: it seems clear that the evaluation process for chairs is simply not currently followed. The question is whether to simply push for policy adherence, or rewrite the policy to include more positive and negative consequences for adherence/lack of adherence.
 - Senator Moretti suggested that if the chairs are evaluated annually, we could then specify that a chair needed a “proficient” rating in at least 2 of the previous 3 years in order to be considered eligible for renewal.
 - Senator Gerg raised concern about the current policy allowing the VPAA to renew a chair without really any justification or oversight.
 - Chair Cotter-Lynch expressed a preference for a strong and clear faculty voice in the process, ideally echoing other policies in which an administrator needs a clear and compelling reason to overrule a faculty decision.
 - Senator Alluisi observed that the current system is that chairs simply stay in their positions by default, with no consequences for not following policy.
 - Senator Atchley expressed a preference that faculty be given a clear means to provide feedback on any evaluation of the chair. This would best be done by anonymous survey or secret ballot.
 - Senator Gerg pointed out that the chair evaluation process is the only one he knows of on campus that does not include “bottom up” input, e.g. student evaluations of faculty teaching, or the faculty senate survey on upper admin.
- The issue of Post-Tenure Review (PTR) was discussed from multiple angles:
 - Chair Cotter-Lynch shared that the reason this issue came to the committee in the first place was that some faculty did not have yearly evaluations to include for promotion, tenure, and PTR due to chairs not conducting yearly evaluations of departmental faculty.
 - Senator Gerg asked whether chairs were regularly reviewed as faculty, and subject to PTR.
 - Senator Moretti confirmed that chairs are included in PTR requirements, per policy
 - Discussion determined that the VPAA should be doing yearly faculty evaluations of chairs.
 - Senator Moretti explained that their performance as chair should be included in this evaluation, as the section for “service” includes a section for administrative duties, which only applies to chairs and other faculty with release time for administrative duties.

- Chairs should still be doing yearly Faculty Development Agreements, but no one on the committee knew if this was regularly done, or what the mechanism for enforcement might be.
- Senator Alluisi pointed out that one of the major problems with the current chair structure is that while, in theory, chairs get release time for administrative duties, in practice, nearly all (or all?) teach overloads, meaning that chairs do not actually receive the time that they are supposed to have to perform their duties.
- Senator Cotter-Lynch asked the committee to clarify next steps, and the following was agreed:
 - Senator Moretti will set up a Discord channel for asynchronous discussion of the issues with the current policy. The goal is to solidify a concrete list of concerns within the next week.
 - Chair Cotter-Lynch will ask for a meeting with AVPAA Ronnenberg and VPAA Golden to discuss our concerns and plan next steps.

Tl;dr: current policy is not followed, in lots of ways, to lots of deleterious effects. We are working on figuring out where it makes the most sense to start: rewriting policy or insisting that current policy be followed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:07pm.