

CLAS Personnel Committee Annual Report 2014-2015

22 March 2015

Activity this year

The CPC's charge is to evaluate faculty members' applications for contract renewal, tenure, and promotion, and to recommend to the Dean an appropriate action for each.

In 2014-2015 the CPC reviewed 15 applications for contract renewal, 30 for tenure and/or promotion to Associate Professor, and 18 for promotion to Full Professor, for a total of 63.

The Faculty Handbook states that "the Committee will normally be expected to accept the recommendation of the unit." Over the past five years the "agreement rate" has been above 90%; so far this year that rate has been about 91%.

As the college transfers to a process of one review for contract renewal, the CPC has attempted to be more proactive than in the past. This year we tried to provide candidates with some feedback on their portfolios when necessary.

The CPC took note of ongoing discussions about the establishment of a university-level review of personnel cases. After discussion of this question, we submitted a memo to the chair of the task force considering this issue. Most importantly, the CPC emphasized in this memo that any such university-wide committee must adhere to approved unit and college standards (and not some other standard) in the evaluation of candidates.

Desiderata

The CPC does not want to set personnel policy, an activity it regards as beyond the scope of its charge. However, in cases where policies are nonexistent or unclear, the CPC effectively does make policy with its recommendations whether it wants to or not. We have identified a set of situations where explicit university and college policies are lacking. Written guidance, either in the form of explicit discussion in unit criteria or formal recommendations from university governance, would be welcome.

1. According to university policy, candidates applying for early tenure or promotion must exceed expectation in all categories of evaluation (i.e., teaching, scholarly and creative activity, service). Where unit criteria do not explicitly provide definitions of what it means to exceed expectations, the CPC is forced to rely upon its own definitions. We would welcome unit standards that give us guidance in this area.
2. If units do not regard tenure and promotion to Associate Professor to be linked, we would encourage them to articulate these differences clearly in the unit standards.
3. It is not always clear to what extent work done before a candidate arrives at GVSU may be used to satisfy requirements for scholarship and professional service. This lack of clarity is especially challenging when evaluating candidates who arrive with credit on the tenure clock. Should a candidate who was granted credit toward tenure be permitted to use work done prior to arrival to argue that scholarship and service criteria have been met? Faculty in CLAS disagree on this issue. The question also arises when a candidate completes most of the work for a project as part of a dissertation or postdoctoral work, but makes minor changes after arriving at GVSU, as part of the publication process. This issue might be addressed more effectively in unit criteria than by university policy. The CPC sees a need for clear guidance for both candidates and evaluators in this area.

Recommendations to units

Service on the CPC requires intensive work over portions of both the fall and winter semesters. Most committee members spend between 12 and 15 hours per week on CPC work from week 6 through week 11 of the winter semester, and for four weeks of the fall semester. We feel it is appropriate to recognize CPC members' efforts as part or all of their "significant focus beyond baseline expectations" for the winter semester.

We would encourage units to have representation on the CPC. There are a number of units in CLAS that have had little or no representation on this committee over the last several years. Members of CPC see the critical importance of disciplinary diversity in their work. Unit representation on the CPC not only benefits the committee but it also benefits the departments. Current and former committee members help units understand how the CPC works and can provide important feedback for the unit personnel process.

In the winter of 2014 the committee put together a best practices document for the preparation of personnel portfolios. This document is available on the CLAS website. We would encourage not only candidates up for review but also mentors, unit heads, and others involved in the unit personnel process to consult this document.

It would be useful for the committee if unit reports could provide a short statement that articulates departmental mentoring practice and describes the mentoring situation for individual candidates.

We very much appreciate early submissions of dossiers by units, especially during the winter semester. This allows us to distribute cases across a wider period of time and makes it easier for us to meet our April 1 deadline.

Acknowledgements

The committee members this year were:

- Donovan Anderson (MLL, chair)
- Jason Crouthamel (HST)
- Tim Fisher (ART)
- Steven Hecht (BMS)
- Christopher Lawrence (CHM)
- Colleen Lewis (MOV)
- Alex Nikitin (BIO)
- Rick Rediske (AWRI, assistant chair)
- Shelly Smith (MTH)
- Victoria Veenstra (COM)
- Mark Williams (MUS)
- Richard Yidana (SOC)

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