SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS

Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness for Promotion and Tenure

(Legislative)

BACKGROUND

In January, 1980, the Joint Faculty/Administrative Commission to Review and Make Recommendations on University Policies Governing Promotion and Tenure (PS-23) issued its final report. Recommendation 7 of that report focused on the evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure. The Commission recommended that the evaluation of teaching should include both peer and student input and that "the methods of evaluation to be used within a unit shall be selected by the faculty of that unit." (The full text of the recommendation of the Commission can be found in Appendix "A"). In September, 1981, the Faculty Affairs Committee presented a legislative report based on the Commission's recommendation. This legislation was subsequently modified by the Senate and passed in February, 1982. (The full text of the original Faculty Affairs recommendation and the final legislation passed by the Senate can be found in Appendix "B"). President Oswald vetoed this legislation in January, 1983. In March, 1983, the Senate held a forensic session on this subject with input from John Centra of ETS and Frederick Gottheil of the University of Illinois - Urbana.

The present proposal is an attempt to incorporate the basic ideas of the PS-23 Commission, the wishes of the Senate as expressed in discussion and votes on the subject, and the ideas put forward by the Council of Academic Deans in three separate documents (February, 1982; May 12, 1983; and January 24, 1984). It also takes into account the objections put forward by former President Oswald in his veto message. More importantly, it represents an attempt by the Faculty Affairs Committee to improve the very confusing current situation concerning the evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Add the following section to Section III of PS-23 after the third paragraph of that section.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIT TO MAKE A JUDGMENT OF THE CANDIDATE’S TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN TERMS OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSIFICATION: EXCELLENT, VERY GOOD, SATISFACTORY, AND UNSATISFACTORY. REVIEWERS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT UNSATISFACTORY CARRIES A NEGATIVE CONNOTATION; SATISFACTORY SHOULD CONVEY A NEUTRAL EVALUATION; VERY GOOD, A POSITIVE ONE; AND EXCELLENT, A HIGHLY POSITIVE EVALUATION. THE UNIT MUST PROVIDE CLEAR DOCUMENTATION FOR ITS JUDGMENT, INCLUDING BOTH PEER AND STUDENT EVALUATIONS. WHERE POSSIBLE, THE EVALUATIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS AND IN A VARIETY OF COURSES.


WITH RESPECT TO STUDENT EVALUATIONS, EACH UNIT SHALL ASK STUDENTS TO RESPOND TO GENERAL (GLOBAL) QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE STUDENTS’ OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE INSTRUCTOR AND OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE COURSE BEING EVALUATED. THERE SHALL BE NO REQUIREMENT THAT ALL UNITS ASK THESE QUESTIONS IN A UNIFORM MANNER OR SEEK ANSWERS ON A UNIFORM SCALE. IN ADDITION TO THESE GENERAL QUESTIONS, UNITS MAY SEEK WHATEVER OTHER INFORMATION THEY DEEM APPROPRIATE. THE STUDENT EVALUATION PROCESS MUST BE MANAGED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE CANDIDATE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE STUDENT RESPONSES OR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SURVEY RESULTS. STUDENT EVALUATION SURVEYS SHALL BELONG TO THE UNITS WHICH ADMINISTER THEM AND SHALL BE SUMMARIZED AND INTERPRETED AS PART OF THE PROMOTION AND TENURE DOCUMENTATION. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS SHALL BE MADE KNOWN TO THE CANDIDATE.

Recommendation 2

This legislation shall supersede all previous University Faculty Senate legislation concerning the evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and tenure. The Senate hereby repeals all other such legislation.

Recommendation 3

The Office of the Executive Vice President and University Provost shall act to facilitate the exchange of methods and ideas concerning the evaluation of teaching among the various units of the University.

Recommendation 4

The following sections should be incorporated into the Administrative Guidelines for PS-23.

1. Possible procedures for student evaluation include in-class surveys and out-of-class evaluations such as exit interviews and retrospective surveys (e.g., post graduate surveys). (These are to be construed as examples only. Units are not restricted to these methods.)
II. The following guidelines for administering student evaluations shall be followed:

1. Responses to evaluation questions must remain anonymous.

2. Directions to the students shall be uniform across administrations.

3. The candidate shall not participate in the administration, collection, or compilation of the survey results.

4. Evaluations dependent on samples should be conducted in accord with standard sampling procedures.

The following additional guidelines shall be followed when in-class evaluations are used:

5. At least two-thirds of the students must be present for the evaluation to be administered.

6. The candidate shall not be present during the administration of the evaluation.

7. The responses shall be collected and returned to the appropriate unit office by the person administering the evaluation.

The following guidelines are suggested, but not required:

8. Units should refrain from having every course evaluated every time it is taught.

9. In-class evaluations should be administered during the next-to-last week of the semester on a day when no examination is scheduled.

RATIONALE

This legislation attempts to address a number of issues and problems. Many are long-standing problems; some have been discussed at length in previous Senate debates. In order to facilitate discussion of the present legislation, we have identified the major issues addressed by the legislation.

(1) Legislative confusion. There is such a variety of Senate legislation regarding teaching evaluation that the PS-23 Commission concluded that it is "not possible to be in compliance with all the Senate legislation and with the intent of PS-23." Two kinds of problems occur. One is confusion between evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure and evaluation for course or instructor improvement. Early Senate legislation dealt with the latter. This legislation deals only with the former. The second problem stems from confusing, if not contradictory, legislation concerning the evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure. Thus we propose the Commission's recommendation that all previous Senate legislation on the evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure be repealed when this legislation is passed.
(2) Need for both peer and student input. The Senate and experts in the field have insisted that student evaluation not be the sole data for evaluating teaching effectiveness. On the other hand, only the students are in the classroom on a daily basis so they can provide an invaluable source of information. Therefore, there is a need for both peer and student input.

(3) Unit-based methodology. The PS-23 Commission argued, "Because the nature of teaching and its purposes vary in specific detail from department to department, the recommendation insists on the department's right to develop a teaching effectiveness assessment methodology appropriate to it. Realistically, more than one department, conceivably all departments, within a college may use the same method when the purposes and the nature of the instruction are highly correlated." We have accepted the Commission's recommendation that the method to be used within the unit be selected by the faculty of the unit. One objection raised with regard to the 1982 legislation was the lack of appropriate guidelines for the departments. We have attempted to provide the basic guidelines in Recommendation 4 of the current proposal. Some faculty have complained that administrators have imposed a method of evaluation without appropriate consultation; others have complained about an imposed method of presenting the results in the dossier. The present legislation addresses both of these problems.

(4) Objectivity. All discussion on the subject emphasize the need for objectivity. The candidate must not be in a position to unduly influence the evaluation. This is especially true for student evaluations.

(5) "Global" questions. The one issue on which there is no consensus in this University is the use of "global" questions -- general questions to be used by all faculty. The PS-23 Commission made no such recommendation. The legislation proposed by the Faculty Affairs Committee in 1981 did contain such a recommendation but it was deleted by the Senate before the legislation was passed. One of the objections cited by President Oswald in his veto message was the lack of global questions. The Council of Academic Deans has also suggested the inclusion of such common items. We are presenting a compromise position on this issue. We propose the two global questions suggested by CADS, but we also propose that there be no requirement that these questions be asked in a uniform manner or answers sought on a uniform scale. In this way we hope to avoid the problem cited by Senators in earlier discussions -- the reduction of teaching evaluation to a single numerical scale.

(6) Standard reporting. The legislation quite properly places primary responsibility for evaluating teaching in the hands of the departments and the campuses. However, the wording used by departments and campuses may vary so much that it may be impossible for college or University level reviewers to understand the intent of the original review level. Units may describe teaching as excellent, exceptional, outstanding, very good, etc. Reviewers at the college or University level have no way of knowing whether these are to be taken as equivalent or various grades of excellence. Furthermore, a candidate whose department is more reserved in its language may be put at an unfair disadvantage. This problem is magnified by the lack of a set of University-wide data to compare candidates. The Council of Academic Deans has suggested a standard set of descriptors be used. The legislation proposes a four-descriptor
classification in which each descriptor has a clear meaning. This way upper level reviewers can know exactly what the initial level evaluation was and still not be tempted to substitute their own judgment for that of the initial level reviewers.


In order that PS-23 include a clear statement of the appropriate procedures for evaluating teaching effectiveness for promotion and tenure, it is recommended that PS-23 and the administrative guidelines be modified to incorporate the following principles and procedures:

(A) Evaluation of teaching effectiveness for purposes of promotion and tenure shall include both peer and student input.

(B) The methods of evaluation to be used within a unit shall be selected by the faculty of that unit. In the case of the college, unit is defined to mean the department or the entire college if the departments of the college all choose to use the same evaluative procedures; for the University Libraries, unit is defined as the University Libraries. It is the responsibility of the unit to provide clear, documented evidence of a candidate's teaching effectiveness, including both peer and student evaluation. The evaluation procedure specified by each unit must be approved by the appropriate dean and by the dean of Academic Instruction for Commonwealth Campuses for those faculty assigned to any of the Commonwealth Campuses; the procedure must also be approved by the provost. It is the intent of this recommendation to encourage the units to develop different evaluation methods as appropriate for major subgroups of the faculty; the methods chosen shall be appropriate to the discipline and to the type and level of teaching involved.

(C) If a unit chooses to use in-class student surveys, they must be designed by or selected by the faculty of that unit for evaluating teaching effectiveness for purposes of promotion and tenure. The process must be managed so that the candidate is not in a position to influence the judgment and interpretation of the survey results. Such surveys shall belong to the unit which administers them and shall be summarized and interpreted as part of the promotion and tenure documentation. The results of the surveys shall be made known to the candidates.

(D) Because earlier legislation creates confusion in the area of evaluation of teaching, the University Faculty Senate should repeal all previous legislation concerning evaluation of teaching as it applies to promotion and tenure processes.

(E) The Provost's Office shall act to facilitate the exchange of methods and ideas among the various units of The Pennsylvania State University.
Appendix "B"

Faculty Affairs Committee Recommendation -- September, 1981

FACULTYAFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION - With regard to teaching evaluations, the committee recommends the following actions.

1. Revise the third paragraph in the description of Department, Campus, or Program Review level (in section III of PS-23) as follows:

   In evaluating a candidate for promotion or tenure, the department committee should seek the views of senior members of the candidate's academic unit. In many cases, evaluations by expert peers in other institutions may provide essential helpful information.

   EVALUATION OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS FOR PURPOSES OF PROMOTION AND TENURE SHALL INCLUDE BOTH PEER AND STUDENT INPUT. THE METHODS OF EVALUATION TO BE USED WITHIN A UNIT, AS WELL AS THE MANNER IN WHICH THE RESULTS ARE PRESENTED IN THE Dossier, SHALL BE SELECTED BY THE FACULTY OF THAT UNIT. IN THE CASE OF THE COLLEGE, "UNIT" IS DEFINED TO MEAN THE DEPARTMENT OR SIMILAR ACADEMIC ENTITY; FOR THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, "UNIT" IS DEFINED AS THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIT TO PROVIDE CLEAR, DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE OF A CANDIDATE'S TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS, INCLUDING BOTH PEER AND STUDENT EVALUATION. REGARDING STUDENT EVALUATIONS, ALL UNITS SHALL ASK A FEW STANDARDIZED COMPREHENSIVE QUESTIONS ON THE OVERALL QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION. IN ADDITION TO THESE STANDARDIZED QUESTIONS, EACH UNIT MAY ALSO SEEK THROUGH STUDENT EVALUATIONS WHATEVER OTHER INFORMATION THE UNIT DEEMS APPROPRIATE. THE STANDARDIZED COMPREHENSIVE QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE A COMMON BASE OF INFORMATION SO THAT ALL LEVELS OF REVIEW CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND AND INTERPRET STUDENT EVALUATIONS. THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE SPECIFIED BY EACH UNIT MUST BE APPROVED BY THE APPROPRIATE DEAN (AND BY THE DEAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH CAMPUSES FOR THOSE FACULTY ASSIGNED TO ANY OF THE COMMONWEALTH CAMPUSES); WHATEVER PROCEDURES A UNIT CHOOSES TO USE MUST BE DESIGNED BY OR SELECTED BY THE FACULTY OF THAT UNIT FOR EVALUATING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS FOR PURPOSES OF PROMOTION AND TENURE. THE PROCESS MUST BE MANAGED SO THAT THE CANDIDATE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE STUDENT RESPONSES OR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SURVEY RESULTS. SUCH SURVEYS SHALL BELONG TO THE UNIT WHICH ADMINISTERS THEM AND SHALL BE SUMMARIZED AND INTERPRETED AS PART OF THE PROMOTION AND TENURE DOCUMENTATION. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS SHALL BE MADE KNOWN TO THE CANDIDATE.

2. This legislation shall supersede all previous University Faculty Senate legislation concerning the evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and tenure. The Senate hereby repeals all other such legislation.

3. The Provost's Office shall act to facilitate the exchange of methods and ideas concerning the evaluation of teaching among the various units of the University.

4. The President of the University and the Chairperson of the University Faculty Senate shall jointly appoint an ad hoc committee of faculty and administrators to develop the standardized comprehensive questions referred to in part 1 of this recommendation.
Legislation passed by the Senate, February 2, 1982

Recommendation 1. Revise the third paragraph in the description of Department, Campus, or Program Review level (in section III of PS-23) as follows:

In evaluating a candidate for promotion and tenure, the department committee should seek the views of senior members of the candidate's academic unit. In many cases, evaluations by expert peers in other institutions may provide essential helpful information.

(1) Evaluation of teaching effectiveness for purposes of promotion and tenure shall include both peer and student input.

(2) The methods of evaluation to be used within a unit, as well as the manner in which the results are presented in the dossier, shall be selected by the faculty of that unit.

(3) In the case of the college, "unit" is defined to mean the department or similar academic entity; for the University Libraries, "unit" is defined as the University Libraries.

(4) It is the responsibility of the unit to provide clear documented evidence of a candidate's teaching effectiveness, including both peer and student evaluation.

(5) Each unit shall seek, through its student evaluations, whatever information the units deem appropriate.

(6) The evaluation procedure specified by each unit must be approved by the appropriate dean (and by the Dean of the Commonwealth Campuses for those faculty assigned to any of the Commonwealth Campuses); whatever procedure a unit chooses to use must be designed by or selected by the faculty of that unit for evaluating teaching effectiveness for purposes of promotion and tenure.

(7) The process must be managed so that the candidate is not in a position to influence the student responses or the interpretation of the survey results.

(8) Such surveys shall belong to the unit which administers them and shall be summarized and interpreted as part of the promotion and tenure documentation. Such surveys shall not be used by the unit for any other purpose without expressed permission of the faculty member.

Item 11, proposed as: "The results of the surveys shall be made known to the candidate." - was returned to the committee so they could clarify procedures, especially the amount of time for results to be made available to faculty members who have been evaluated.

Recommendation 2.

This legislation shall supersede all previous University Faculty Senate legislation concerning the evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and tenure. The Senate hereby repeals all other such legislation.
Recommendation 3.

The Provost's Office shall act to facilitate the exchange of methods and ideas concerning the evaluation of teaching among the various units of the University.

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