May 4, 2011

TO: The General Faculty, Humboldt State University

FROM: The University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC)

SUBJECT: 2010-11 Annual Report

The annual end of the year open forum with the UFPC will be held on Friday, May 6, 2011 from 10 to 11 am in Siemens Hall 115. The Committee regrets any conflicts with other scheduled events. Each department is urged to have a representative of the Initiating Unit Personnel Committee (IUPC) attend this meeting. Candidates for any personnel action (retention, tenure or promotion) are also urged to attend this meeting.

Those serving on the 2010-11 UFPC included Sam Sonntag (chair) from Politics, Sharon Tuttle from Computer Science, Claire Knox from Child Development, Sheila Steinberg from Sociology, and Laura Hahn from Communication.

During the Fall and Spring terms of the 2010-11 academic year, the UFPC reviewed 41 Working Personnel Action Files (WPAFs) and 2 Range Elevation Portfolios (REPs). The UFPC is very pleased with the high quality of teaching, scholarship, creative activity, and service work evidenced by an accomplished and outstanding faculty.

Beginning in Fall 2010, all candidates for tenure and/or promotion were required to use the "new" version of Appendix J. Under Appendix J criteria, the IUPC is expected to rate the candidate's scholarly/creative activities and his/her service as "minimum essential," "good" or "excellent." Reasons for each ranking should be included in the IUPC letter. The reasoning should be based on clear, consistent and thorough application of the department's standards and criteria for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) to the evaluative and non-evaluative evidence provided in the WPAF.

The UFPC found a high degree of variability of standards and criteria for RTP among those departments that have developed and adopted standards. For example, some departments require a minimum average numerical score on a specific item on anonymous student evaluations for all courses in order for a candidate's teaching to be considered excellent. Some departments have complex point systems for rating the ancillary areas; in some cases the number of points is determined by first categorizing activities generally and then ranking hierarchically each and every activity within its category. Some departments add a time cycle to the categorizing and ranking. Other departments use amount of time spent to rate service activities, resulting in a couple of hours out of dozens determining the difference between a "good" and 'excellent" rating. Often none of these complex systems is actually applied by the IUPC or even possible to apply based on the information provided in the WPAF. Because of the unevenness and obfuscation of the process of departments developing, adopting and applying

standards and criteria for RTP, the UFPC sent a memorandum to Provost Snyder on March 4, 2011, outlining the major issues. The Faculty Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate has been tasked with considering these issues and developing a plan of resolution. The UFPC encourages IUPCs to carefully consider how existing department standards and criteria can be applied in a fair and consistent manner that is helpful and transparent to the candidate as well as to subsequent review committees.

There were numerous problems this year with the organization of peer review committees. The UFPC would like to remind the faculty that, according to Appendix J, faculty members cannot serve on more than one level of review, faculty members under review themselves cannot serve on a review committee, and chairs cannot serve on a review committee if they write a chair (i.e., administrative) evaluation of the candidate. The UFPC requests that the composition of review committees carefully adheres to Appendix J stipulations. In addition, all members of review committees should review each and every file, registered by signing the log in the WPAF, and all reviewers should ensure that they are reviewing a complete WPAF.

The UFPC has some general recommendations for all candidates and/or IUPCs. These include the following.

Evaluation of Teaching:

- Colleagues can optimize the effectiveness of peer-reviewed teaching evaluations with several visits to different classes. Their letters are most effective when the content is both descriptive and evaluative, as specified in Appendix J:

  > Teaching effectiveness is assessed primarily through collegial evaluation of classroom teaching and summary analysis of student evaluations by peers. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness shall be based primarily on written statements from colleagues within the candidate's academic discipline(s). The statements should be supported by direct observation of the candidate's performance. Such observation can take place in a variety of ways, such as classroom visitations, team teaching, guest lecturing, etc. Multiple observations, conducted over a period of time, are preferable to a single observation conducted solely for personnel purposes (Appendix J, Section IX.B.1. a)(4)).

- Faculty members serving on peer review committees can write collegial letters which include evaluation of teaching effectiveness based on classroom observations. If there are relatively few members of a department, the IUPC or the candidate should solicit teaching observations by members of other departments.

- If the candidate teaches a course that students consistently rate low, no matter who teaches the class, it is important for the IUPC to explain those ratings in their letter.

- The IUPC or candidate should explain circumstances leading to a low percentage return of student evaluations. This might include the number of students who have stopped

attending the class without an official drop. It is probably better not to give the evaluations on the very last day of class.

- Courses currently being taught should be listed in the Personnel Data Sheet (PDS) Section II.a. Courses that are taught multiple times need to be described fully only once, although changes each semester may be included in addition to the full description. Descriptions should not be taken verbatim from the catalog or copies of sections of the syllabus. The descriptions should be geared toward informing evaluators of the overall nature of the course as well as special circumstances (such as students enrolling in the course multiple times).

- Averaging anonymous student ratings across more than one class and/or more than one category is not statistically significant and thus should not be included in the WPAF.

- The IUPC and/or candidate should verify that student evaluations have been properly scanned. This year there were whole sets of evaluations in which only a handful of evaluation forms were "read," leading to inaccurate average scores assessing teaching effectiveness.

- The procedure for soliciting signed student letters should be provided in Section 3 of the WPAF. Candidates should not solicit letters individually from students with whom they have an on-going supervisory relationship.

- Appendix J, Section IX. B.1.a)(3) begins with: "Faculty are expected to participate in professional development activities that enhance teaching effectiveness." Candidates should list all such activities in their PDS. Non-evaluative evidence of participation can be included in Section 7 of the WPAF.

- Candidates should respond to and reflect upon collegial and student evaluations of their teaching performance in their Teaching Philosophy statement and/or Course Descriptions in the PDS.

Ancillary Areas:

- It is the task of the IUPC to assist candidates in preparing WPAFs that contain supporting materials which address RTP performance criteria and standards (Appendix J, Section VIII.B.1.b). It should be part of the task of the IUPC to confirm and evaluate the information listed in the PDS of a candidate. This includes verifying and confirming that non-evaluative evidence for activities in ancillary areas exists and is placed in the appropriate section of the WPAF. During the current year, there were several cases where, for example, scholarly contributions listed as peer-reviewed in the candidate's PDS had no corresponding evidence in Section 8 of the WPAF.

- While Appendix J references the Boyer criteria for evaluating scholarly/creative activities, the UFPC wishes to emphasize that these criteria do not preclude the necessity of some external peer evaluation of the significance of activities in ancillary areas. The IUPCs and

candidates should solicit letters attesting to the quality and significance of each accomplishment, whether that is service work, creative activity or scholarship. This documentation is important to the review process.

- Publications should be listed in full bibliographic format in the PDS.

- The Index in Section 1 of the WPAF should include a complete list of all material in the WPAF, as well as what is contained in the supplementary binder.

- Supplemental binders of course syllabi, scholarly works, etc. should be retained by the IUPC. Subsequent reviewers can request a candidate's binder from the IUPC if needed. The IUPC and/or colleagues should evaluate the contents of any supplemental binder(s) in their evaluative or committee letters.

- The faculty candidate should cite accomplishments and activities only once under the most appropriate section of the WPAF and the PDS. Those that are relevant to more than one section should be referenced in the main section with a note "Relevant also to Section 'blank'" (Appendix J, Section VII.B.2.b)).

General file suggestions:

- "Material in each section [of the WPAF] shall be in reverse chronological order, most recent material first" [Appendix J, Section V.E.2.].

- The Personal Development Plan (PDP) belongs in Section 4 of the WPAF, following the PDS.

- Faculty who have had a sabbatical leave should include a report of the results of the leave in Section 2 of the WPAF.

- Candidates are allowed to add written responses to recommendations and evaluations as part of their WPAF. These responses are helpful to the UFPC in clarifying differing perceptions of the candidate's work and service.

- It is the IUPC's responsibility to ensure that all evaluative peer letters are in the file by the appropriate closing date and initialed by the candidates.

- Each candidate has a Personnel Action File that is contained in the office of the appropriate Dean. A member of the IUPC should consult that file to be sure everything from it that is relevant to the current personnel action is included in the WPAF.

- The UFPC urges each IUPC or department to select a mentor for junior faculty who can assist with general file organization and presentation. Disorganized files are a disservice to the candidate and a hindrance to the review process.

The UFPC worked with both the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice President for Academic Personnel Services in developing a comprehensive set of

Personnel Action Dates for the 2011-12 academic year. Those timelines may be found at: http://www.humboldt.edu/aps/docs/RTP/PersonnelActionDates%202011-2012.pdf. Candidates should refer to their reappointment letter to determine whether they are on the fall or spring schedule. Please note that anyone who did not receive a 2-year reappointment this academic year will have a file that is due to their IUPC on September 1, 2011.

Appendix J and K clearly require the UFPC to do a thorough evaluation of each WPAF or REP. We strive to be full, fair, and impartial evaluators, and we welcome any suggestions about how to do our collective work more effectively. We also believe we can function as mentors by offering detailed recommendations for constructing a strong file; a well-organized file is more easily read and evaluated. We are working with the Associate Vice President for Academic Personnel Services to identify model files that will be available to RTP candidates.

In closing, the members of the UFPC are honored by the trust vested in us.

Sincerely,

Selma K. Sonntag, Chair
Claire G. Knox
Laura K. Hahn
Sheila L. Steinberg
Sharon Tuttle