

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

University Faculty Personnel Committee

May 7, 2018

TO: The General Faculty, Humboldt State University

FROM: The University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC)

SUBJECT: 2017-18 Annual Report

The annual end-of-the-year open information meeting with the UFPC is on Wednesday, May 7 at 3:00pm, in the Goodwin Forum.

Serving on the 2017-18 UFPC were continuing members Christopher Aberson (Psychology, Chair), Eileen Cashman (Environmental Resources Engineering), and Benjamin Marschke (History), and new members Marcy Burstiner (Journalism and Mass Communication) and Joshua Meisel (Sociology).

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the UFPC reviewed the following numbers and types of files:

• Group 3 Retention (reappointment) for Probationary Faculty	31
• Group 4 Retention (reappointment) for Probationary Faculty (\$18)	03
• Group 5 Retention with Tenure/Promotion	10
• Group 6 Promotion of Tenured Faculty	04
• Group 7 Temporary Faculty Range Elevation	07
	<u>Total</u> <u>55</u>

The UFPC is impressed with the quality of teaching, scholarship, creative activity, and service demonstrated by the outstanding faculty of Humboldt State University. Serving on the UFPC raises one's awareness about what a special place HSU is and the dedication of our colleagues. We are proud of the remarkable work being conducted across campus.

Early Tenure and Promotion:

AY 2017-2018 saw a considerable number of early tenure files. Nine of the 10 Group 5 files involved early tenure decisions. These cases are challenging because Appendix J does not provide clear guidance on early tenure and none of the departmental standards addressed early tenure criteria. In the absence of such criteria, the UFPC relied on our own interpretation

of Appendix J and detailed this interpretation in each letter. This is not policy, nor is it proposed as a solution. Rather, the committee provided our working definition to ensure transparency.

The statement on early tenure reads as follows:

Appendix J IV.F.5 states:

The President may award tenure to a faculty unit employee before the normal (6) year probationary period (13.3, 13.19) if the following criteria are met:

- a) Such consideration is initiated by the faculty unit employee's department or equivalent unit or by the faculty member with the knowledge of his/her department or unit.
- b) The faculty unit employee demonstrates clear evidence that s/he has achieved, before the normal probationary period, a record of accomplishment that meets the standards and level of performance for tenure indicated in this appendix.
- c) The length and breadth of the faculty unit employee's service are sufficient to provide a high expectation that the prior patterns of achievement and contribution will continue.

Without specific departmental guidelines regarding early tenure, the UFPC applied Appendix J to evaluate early tenure cases.

Consistent with Appendix J (IV.F.5.c), candidates must show a sustained pattern of teaching excellence.

As stipulated in Appendix J (IV.F.5.b), the candidate "... achieved, before the normal probationary period, a record of accomplishment that meets the standards and level of performance for tenure," Scholarly/Creative Activity contributions must meet or exceed standards for a six year period (e.g., if a department requires four contributions per year, the candidates would need 24 contributions, regardless of the current probationary year).

As stipulated in Appendix J (IV.F.5.b), the candidate "... achieved, before the normal probationary period, a record of accomplishment that meets the standards and level of performance for tenure," Service contributions must meet or exceed standards for a six year period (e.g., if a department requires 90 hours per year, the candidates would need 540 hours, regardless of the current probationary year).

The UFPC recommends modifications to Appendix J that provide clear and prescriptive guidance on early tenure decisions. In the absence of such action, departments should address early tenure in their standards.

Lecturer Range Elevations:

Many lecturers applying for elevation served in their current range for 10 or more years. This created files that included teaching evaluations from large numbers of courses. Some files approached 1,000 pages. It was clear to the UFPC that this process required considerably more work than necessary (e.g., inclusion of course evaluations going back to the initial appointment). The UFPC recommends development of clear guidelines for file preparation that makes this process less onerous for lecturers.

General File Preparation:

The UFPC refers candidates to the “Guidelines for Preparation of the Personnel Data Sheet,” available from the Academic Personnel Services’ website, which is separate from the directions embedded in the blank PDS form. These guidelines are particularly useful for faculty undergoing their first review.

Departmental Standards:

According to Appendix J, the general criterion for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) decisions is “academic competence,” with teaching/librarian/counseling effectiveness being of utmost importance. The Initiating Unit Personnel Committee (IUPC), the Chair, the Dean, and the College Personnel Committee (CPC) are expected to evaluate whether the candidate’s teaching/librarian/counseling effectiveness is excellent and to rate the candidate’s Scholarly/Creative Activities and Service as “Minimum Essential,” “Good” or “Excellent,” according to the candidate’s departmental standards and criteria for RTP. These must be currently approved (or expired within the previous two years) and must be consistent with Appendix J.

The UFPC continues to find considerable variability in departmental standards. Some standards are too weak compared to other departmental standards. This creates situations where candidates with little productivity receive favorable evaluations. Focusing on scholarship, there were cases where candidates met departmental standards but did not meet the Appendix J standards. Appendix J (X.A.2) standards that state associate professors “must have a reasonable record of participation and achievements in the combined non-teaching activities (scholarly/creative activities and service), and show promise of continuing growth in these activities” and “the rank of associate professor is reserved for those assistant professors who have clearly demonstrated that they are well along the way towards achieving those qualities essential for senior rank.” The UFPC reminds candidates and all levels of review that department standards cannot diminish the Appendix J standard.

The UFPC recommends that all departments develop clear, concise, and transparent standards that provide a framework to support faculty and demand rigor in scholarly/creative activities.

Department standards providing distinct guidelines for evaluating patterns of teaching/librarian/counseling effectiveness, scholarship and creative activities, and service are most useful to reviewers. For example, a numerical range of ratings expected on teaching evaluations for most items in most courses is preferred over a fixed minimum score on all or on specific items. Moreover, a required number of completed peer-reviewed publications or creative pieces is preferable to standards requiring “engagement.”

The IUPC, the chair, the dean, and the CPC should apply the standards, detail how candidates meet the particular standard, and explicitly state whether the candidate meets or does not meet standards for “excellence in teaching effectiveness,” as well as whether the candidate shall be ranked as “Minimum Essential,” “Good,” or “Excellent” in the ancillary areas.

Guidelines for Evaluating Teaching:

Colleagues should support candidates by making several visits to different courses over time. Colleagues’ letters are most effective when the content is both descriptive and evaluative, as specified in Appendix J Section IX.B.1. a[4]:

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.

In several cases, files lacked collegial observations or provided too few observations. In cases where the UFPC letter noted the lack of observations, we urge IUPCs to review Appendix J with departmental colleagues to reinforce their responsibilities in the RTP process.

The IUPC should take responsibility for ensuring that all department faculty members evaluate the candidate’s teaching based on direct classroom observation. Having numerous colleagues observe the same class session is less effective than having numerous class sessions observed by different faculty members over time. Collegial evaluations of teaching performance should include review of syllabi, materials, and Canvas pages.

Faculty members serving on personnel committees can and should write collegial letters that include evaluations of teaching effectiveness based on classroom observations. Serving on a review committee does not excuse this responsibility. If there are relatively few faculty members in a department, the IUPC or the candidate should solicit teaching observations by faculty members from other departments.

Candidates should respond to and reflect upon collegial and student evaluations of their teaching performance in their Teaching Philosophy and/or Course Descriptions in the Personnel Data Sheet (PDS). It is good practice (and helpful to evaluators) for the candidate to comment upon or explain low or otherwise unusual student evaluations or patterns in evaluations. Candidates should explain plans to address student concerns as well as reflect on how new strategies affected course effectiveness.

Neither candidates nor reviewers should average across evaluation items because averaging anonymous student ratings ignores variability of item ratings. Instead, address the range of scores with a focus on areas for improvement and strengths.

Appendix J (VII. B. 3. b) states “The IUPC shall invite written statements from the candidates’ current HSU students and current student employees to ensure that there is adequate notification and opportunity for substantive student evaluation.” All IUPCs need to attend to this aspect of their role. The procedure for soliciting student letters should be provided in Section 3 of the WPAF. Candidates should not solicit letters individually from students.

Deviations from a pattern of teaching excellence apparent in low ratings on anonymous student evaluations should be explained by the IUPC. For example, if the candidate teaches a course that students consistently rate low, no matter who teaches the class, then it is important for the IUPC to explain those ratings in its letter.

Candidates should list courses currently taught in the 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. Course descriptions should inform evaluators of the overall nature of the course, pedagogical issues, as well as special circumstances. Candidates should not provide verbatim descriptions from the catalog or sections of the syllabus.

Specific Guidelines for Evaluating Scholarship/Creative Activities and Service:

Appendix J references the Boyer Model for evaluating scholarly/creative activities and notes that “Scholarly/creative activity shall be characterized by clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, and reflective critique...Collegial/peer review appropriate to the discipline is required and shall be defined in the department/unit RTP criteria and standards.” In many cases, departments and candidates categorize activities as scholarship (e.g., scholarship of teaching) but do not provide collegial/peer review. Activities that lack collegial/peer review cannot count as scholarship. Candidate should list such activities as service.

The UFPC received several files where reviews from previous cycles noted the lack of appropriate review for Boyer-defined scholarship yet the activities remained classified as scholarship and still lacked appropriate review in the current cycle. In several cases, the IUPC

also continued to classify these activities incorrectly. In these cases, the IUPC should solicit letters attesting to the quality and significance of each accomplishment.

IUPCs must assist candidates in preparing WPAFs that contain supporting materials addressing RTP criteria and standards. This responsibility includes verifying and confirming information listed in the PDS and ensuring that non-evaluative evidence for activities in ancillary areas is placed in the appropriate section of the WPAF. The UFPC urges IUPCs to work with candidates before their files close.

Publications should be listed in full bibliographic format in the PDS with descriptions of audience, venue, and peer-review status.

Descriptions of scholarship that is not yet published should include clear indications of the status of the work. This year, several files classified scholarship using terms such as “in progress” or “forthcoming.” It was evident from the files that candidates used these terms in different manners. Some used forthcoming to indicate work that was accepted for publication but not yet published. Others used forthcoming to indicate work that they expected to publish but had not yet received acceptance. The UFPC urges candidates to provide a narrative explanation of the status of their work.

A similar issue existed for descriptions of editorial work. Outlets use terms like “editor” and “associate editor” in inconsistent manners. Sometimes these terms indicate a leadership role involving securing reviews and making a final decision on manuscripts based on those reviews. In other cases, the terms are honorific, indicating completion of a single manuscript review without any decision-making role. Again, candidates should clearly describe their activities to allow for appropriate evaluations.

Grants should be explained by providing information on the specific role of the faculty member, whether the grant was funded or not, as well as the impact of the grants and other relevant details.

Departments that specify an exact number of required hours for service activities should provide a narrative on the required role of the candidate in service activities to meet such hourly criteria. If such systems are used, the IUPC should meet with the candidate and calibrate the points or weights given to each item so that the chair, dean, CPC, and UFPC can clearly understand how the candidate meets every standard and criterion.

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.).

In preparing the PDS, candidates should utilize their departmental standards and criteria (if they are approved) and create a strong and explicit argument that demonstrates exactly how they have met the standards. In cases where activities may be counted as either Scholarly/Creative Activities or Service, the candidate can only count the activity once and should make it clear why the activity belongs in the particular category.

Faculty members who have had a sabbatical leave should include the report of the results of the leave.

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 provide a narrative on how these activities have informed their teaching in their Teaching Philosophy.

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 Teaching, Scholarly/Creative Activities, or Service.

The UFPC urges each IUPC or department to select a mentor for junior faculty who can assist with general file organization and presentation.

Appendix J and K clearly require the UFPC to conduct a thorough evaluation of each WPAF or Range Elevation Portfolio. We strive to be full, fair, and impartial evaluators. We welcome any suggestions about how to do our collective work more effectively. We also consider ourselves as mentors to our colleagues and strive to offer detailed recommendations for constructing a strong file. We encourage candidates and evaluators to contact us with any questions they may have about file preparation.

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

Sincerely,

Christopher Aberson, Chair
Marcy Burstiner
Eileen Cashman
Benjamin Marschke
Joshua Meisel