

# HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

## University Faculty Personnel Committee

May 3, 2017

TO: The General Faculty, Humboldt State University

FROM: The University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC)

SUBJECT: 2016-17 Annual Report

The annual end-of-the-year open information meeting with the UFPC is on Wednesday, May 3 at 4:00pm, in MUS A 130.

Those serving on the 2016-17 UFPC were: continuing member Tasha R. Howe (Psychology, Chair), returning member Mary I. Bockover (Philosophy), and new members Christopher Aberson (Psychology), Eileen Cashman (ERE), and Benjamin Marschke (History).

During the 2016-2017 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 (S17)	01
• Group 5 Retention with Tenure/Promotion	13
• Group 5-b S17 Special Promotion Schedule	03
• Group 6 Promotion of Tenured Faculty	08
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>56</u></b>

The UFPC is very impressed with the high quality of teaching, scholarship, creative activity, and service demonstrated by the accomplished and outstanding faculty of Humboldt State University. Serving on the UFPC raises one's awareness about what a special place HSU is, and how hard-working and dedicated our colleagues are. We are proud of the remarkable work taking place across campus. In most cases brought before us, the high level of candidates' academic competence was readily apparent.

### **General Guidelines for Evaluating Academic Competence:**

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 of the faculty handbook.

The UFPC continues to find a high degree of variability and inconsistency in departmental standards and criteria for RTP. Some standards are extremely lax and require virtually no peer-review of candidates'

work outside of HSU, leading to poorly qualified candidates being retained or promoted based on those standards. Some standards are difficult to interpret, others appear to be incompatible with Appendix J, and some are so rigid/detailed that highly qualified candidates cannot meet standards for tenure or promotion. These trends were found in standards that have been recently updated and/or revised under the guidance of the Committee on Faculty RTP Criteria and Standards.

The UFPC recommends that all departments develop clear, concise, and transparent standards, which provide a framework to both support faculty and demand rigor in scholarly/creative activities. Department standards and criteria that provide 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 rigid, fixed minimum score on all or on specific items. Moreover, a required number of completed peer-reviewed publications or creative pieces is preferable to a vague standard of “engagement” or “works in progress.”

Appendix J maintains that some appropriate level of peer-review of scholarly/creative work is expected. Departments should meet such expectations when developing their standards, and standards should be revised at least every five years. Departments that have a point system for scholarship/creative activities should categorize discipline-specific variations (e.g., first vs. middle authorship; technical reports vs. journal publications; web development; commercial work). For tenure and promotion, IUPCs should solicit letters from external scholars/artists who can attest to the quality of the candidate’s contributions within the context of the discipline.

Furthermore, the IUPC, the Chair, the Dean, and the CPC should apply the standards and state explicitly 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.

#### **Specific 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:

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]).

To assist in this endeavor, the Faculty Affairs Committee developed a checklist to organize collegial peer teaching evaluations. The intent was to provide a tool to help focus collegial letters, not to replace them. The UFPC appreciates their work and the positive contributions to the RTP process. The checklist is available on the [UFPC website](#).

- 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 course websites.
- Faculty members serving on personnel committees may write collegial letters that include evaluations of teaching effectiveness based on classroom observations. 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 any plans to improve low evaluations 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 across more than one question is mixing unrelated items together and creating a meaningless score. Instead, the range of scores should be addressed.
- The procedure for soliciting student letters should be provided in Section 3 of the eWPAF. Candidates should not solicit letters individually from students with whom they have an on-going supervisory relationship. Solicitation of letters from current students should be carried out by the IUPC to avoid any indication of coercion or inappropriate actions by the candidate.
- 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.
- Courses currently being taught should be listed 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. Descriptions should not be taken verbatim from the catalog or sections of the syllabus. The descriptions should be geared toward informing evaluators of the overall nature of the course, pedagogical issues, as well as special circumstances (such as students enrolling in the course multiple times).
- The IUPC's responsibilities include assisting and mentoring lecturers concerning the process of submitting an eREP. IUPCs should ensure that the required observations of teaching and course evaluations for lecturers are included in the eREP.

**Specific Guidelines for Evaluating Scholarship/Creative Activities and Service:**

- IUPCs must assist candidates in preparing eWPAFs which contain supporting materials that address 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 eWPAF.
- Appendix J references the Boyer Model for evaluating scholarly/creative activities, which some departments and candidates interpret as indicating that the candidate's work is exempt from peer-review. However, the UFPC underscores that Boyer requires external peer evaluation of the significance of activities. The IUPC should solicit letters attesting to the quality and significance of each accomplishment. This documentation is vital to the review process.
- Publications should be listed in full bibliographic format in the PDS with descriptions of audience, venue, and peer-review status.
- 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 eWPAF) 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.
- If the candidate's department does not have approved Standards and Criteria, unapproved Standards and Criteria may not be placed in the eWPAF and may not be used in the evaluation of a candidate for retention, promotion, or tenure.
- 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 eWPAF. 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 eWPAF. 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 eWPAF or eREP. 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 consider ourselves to be mentors to our colleagues by offering 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,

Tasha R. Howe, Chair  
Christopher Aberson  
Mary I. Bockover  
Eileen Cashman  
Benjamin Marschke