

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

University Faculty Personnel Committee

May 1, 2015

TO: The General Faculty, Humboldt State University

FROM: The University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC)

SUBJECT: 2014-15 Annual Report

The annual end-of-the-year open information meeting with the UFPC is on Friday, May 1 at 3:00 pm in HGH 106.

Those serving on the 2014-15 UFPC are continuing members Laura Hahn (Chair, Fall 2014) from Communication and Mary Bockover (Philosophy) and new members Kris Patzlaff (Art), Susan Edinger Marshall (Forestry and Wildland Resources), and Gregg Gold (Psychology). Sam (Selma K.) Sonntag (Politics; FERP) is serving as Chair this spring semester while Laura Hahn is on sabbatical.

During the fall and spring terms of the 2014-15 academic year, the UFPC reviewed approximately 40 Working Personnel Action Files (WPAFs), many of them electronic (eWPAFs), and nine electronic Range Elevation Portfolios (eREPs). 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.

According to Appendix J, the general criterion for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) decisions is “academic competence,” with teaching/librarian/counseling effectiveness being the most important in determining academic competence. The Initiating Unit Personnel Committee (IUPC), the Chair, the College Personnel Committee (CPC), and the Dean 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 consistent with Appendix J.

The UFPC continues to find a high degree of variability, inconsistency and rigidity in the standards and criteria for RTP among those departments that have developed and adopted them as well as those that have updated and revised them under the guidance

of the Committee on Faculty RTP Criteria and Standards. The UFPC recommends clear and concise standards to be developed, with criteria being transparent and flexible. Department standards and criteria that establish guidelines for ascertaining patterns of teaching/librarian/counseling effectiveness, scholarship and creative activities, and service are the most useful to reviewers. For example, a numerical range of ratings on anonymous student evaluations for most items on most courses is preferable to a rigid, fixed minimum average numerical score on all items or on specific items on anonymous student evaluations for all courses in determining whether a candidate meets the standard of teaching excellence. Departments should avoid a rigid point system for scholarship and creative activities which makes it difficult to categorize discipline-specific variations (e.g., first vs. middle authorship; published reports vs. journal publications; blog entries and commercial work). Departments should also avoid specifying the exact number of hours spent on service activities to determine the difference between a “good” and “excellent” rating. Often none of these complex systems is actually applied by the IUPC or is even possible to apply based on the information provided in the WPAF/eWPAF. The IUPC letter should apply the department’s approved standards and criteria for RTP — or the standards and criteria in Appendix J if the department’s standards and criteria have not been approved — to the evaluative and non-evaluative evidence provided in the WPAF/eWPAF in a clear, consistent and thorough manner. The UFPC reminds all departments that their standards and criteria should be reviewed and revised every five years.

The UFPC has some general recommendations for all candidates and reviewers. These include the following.

Evaluation of Teaching:

- Colleagues can optimize the effectiveness of collegial 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)).

To assist in this endeavor, the Faculty Affairs Committee developed a checklist to help focus 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 all observe the same class session is less effective than having numerous class sessions observed by different faculty members. Collegial evaluations of teaching performance should include review of syllabi and course websites.
- Faculty members serving on peer review committees may write collegial letters which include evaluation 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 statement and/or Course Descriptions in the Personnel Data Sheet (PDS).
- 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, it is important for the IUPC to explain those ratings in their 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 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).
- The IUPC's responsibilities include assisting and mentoring lecturers concerning the process of submitting an eREP. The IUPCs should ensure that the required observations of teaching and course evaluations for lecturers are included in the eREP.

Ancillary Areas:

- It is the task of the IUPC to assist candidates in preparing WPAFs/eWPAFs that contain supporting materials which address RTP performance criteria and standards

(Appendix J, Section VIII.B.1.b) and to confirm and evaluate the information listed in the PDS of a candidate. This responsibility includes verifying and confirming that non-evaluative evidence for activities in ancillary areas exists and is placed in the appropriate section of the WPAF/e-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 the accomplishment is scholarship/creative activities or service. 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.
- The Index in Section 1 of the WPAF/eWPAF 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 may request a candidate's binder from the IUPC if necessary. 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/eWPAF and the PDS. Those accomplishments 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:

- Candidates should ensure that the cover page of their WPAF/eWPAF or eREP is accurate and complete.
- "Material in each section [of the WPAF/eWPAF] shall be in reverse chronological order, most recent material first" [Appendix J, Section V.E.2.].
- All levels of review (IUPC, Chair, CPC, and Dean) must use the terms "Excellent," "Good," or "Minimum Essential" when evaluating a candidate's performance in each area of review in accordance with the department standards and criteria or Appendix J.

- 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 in Section 2 of the WPAF/eWPAF.
- Candidates are allowed to add written responses to recommendations and evaluations as part of their WPAF/eWPAF. These responses are helpful to the UFPC in clarifying differing perceptions of the candidate's teaching, scholarly/creative activities and service.
- Each candidate has a Personnel Action File that is maintained 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/eWPAF.
- 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 the Senior Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs and Human Resources in developing a comprehensive set of Personnel Action Dates for the 2015-16 academic year. Those timelines may be found on the Academic Personnel Services (APS).

Appendix J and K clearly require the UFPC to do a thorough evaluation of each WPAF/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 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.

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

Sincerely,

Selma K. Sonntag, Chair (Spring 2015)
 Mary I. Bockover
 Gregg Gold
 Susan Edinger Marshall
 Kris Patzlaff