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SANDERS - BROWN CENTER ON AGING

September 4, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Lee Todd, Ph.D., President and University Senate Chair,
Kaveh Tagavi, Ph.D., Senate Council Chair

From: Lee X. Blonder, Ph.D., Chair, Senate Advisor Committee on Privilege and Tenure

UXB

RE: Annual Report

Enclosed please find the annual report of the Senate Advisor Committee on Privilege and Tenure (9/1/06 through 8/31/07).

On behalf of the SACPT committee, I would like to express appreciation for the confidence you have shown in appointing us members of this important committee. We have done our best to honor this and hope that we have served well the interests of the University and its faculty.

Please contact me should you require additional information.

cc: Sheila Brothers, Office of the Senate Council

Enclosure

Senate Advisory Committee on Privilege and Tenure

Annual Report, 2006-2007

The Senate Advisory Committee on Privilege and Tenure (SACPT) held nine formal meetings during the previous year. The first meeting was held on Sept. 27, 2006 and the final meeting on Aug. 13, 2007. The members of the committee included Lee Blonder (Chair), Ernest Bailey, Donald Case, Jodelle Deem, Faith Harders, Anne Harrison, Deborah Hill, Gail Hoyt, Robert McKenzie, and Hollie Swanson. During this period, the committee reviewed four cases. Two involved denial of tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor, one involved promotion to the rank of full professor, and one involved a case in which a faculty member requested clarification as to whether a Dean has the authority to prevent a department faculty and chair from assembling a tenure and promotion dossier to submit for reconsideration by the College in the seventh year. The committee decided that the review of a fifth appeal, involving a negative tenure decision (Regular Title Series) and received in August, would be transferred to the new chair and committee active as of Sept. 1st, 2007.

Summary of cases investigated:

1. Case of denial of tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, Special Title Series.

The SACPT concluded that procedural violations occurred in this case and that this faculty member was held to inappropriate standards. In particular, the standards by which this faculty member was evaluated were not approved by an area committee or the provost and did not correspond with the position guidelines and criteria that were approved in 1975. The SACPT recommended to the President that the Provost review the dossier and consider awarding the faculty member tenure and promotion. The President and Provost acted on the recommendation and the faculty member was promoted and granted tenure.

2. Case of denial of promotion to Professor, Regular Title Series.

The SACPT found that procedural and privilege violations occurred in this case and that this faculty member was judged based on incomplete and inaccurate information and held to standards that represent a violation of academic freedom. The faculty member also was not afforded "due process" in the review of the dossier by the full Area Committee. The SACPT recommended that the President and the Provost review this case in light of the errors and issues noted, and re-consider the promotion of this faculty member to Professor. The President acted on the recommendation by the SACPT and the faculty member was promoted.

3. Case of faculty member requesting the SACPT to clarify whether a Dean has the authority to prevent a department faculty and chair from assembling a tenure and promotion dossier to submit for reconsideration by the College in the seventh year.

The SACPT found that the Dean violated University Regulations by first, overstepping his authority and instituting a requirement that the list of external reviewers be "vetted" by the Dean's Office prior to permitting the department chair to solicit them; thereby preventing

the chair from initiating dossier development. By extension, the SACPT found that the Dean violated the Administrative Regulations that give the department chair the authority to initiate dossier development and to submit the dossier to the Dean for review. Lastly, the SACPT found that the Dean violated faculty privilege in communicating to the department that their unanimous recommendation to re-consider the faculty member for tenure and promotion in the seventh and terminal year would not be respected. The SACPT recommended that the President, in consultation with the Provost, authorize the department chair to initiate the development of the dossier for review in the seventh-year. Furthermore, the SACPT recommended that the dossier be reviewed by the area committee and the provost, even in the event of a negative decision by the dean. This case is still pending.

4. Case of denial of tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, Regular Title Series.

The SACPT found that two procedural violations occurred in this case. First the consulted faculty members wrote their letters without having had the opportunity to review the external letters. Second, the department chair submitted a letter both in his capacity as chair and as consulted faculty member. In addition, the latter letter contained conflicting and erroneous information which could have biased the review of the case. The SACPT recommended to the President that the department faculty be given the opportunity to read the external letters and revise their letters. Furthermore the SACPT recommended that the chair be advised not to submit a letter as consulted faculty member. The SACPT recommended that the tenure and promotion process proceed through the levels of review according to departmental and administrative regulations. This case is still pending.

Recommendations

1. The SACPT would like to express a concern regarding how scholarly activity is being evaluated. The committee has observed a potential over-reliance on journal impact factors, an easily acquired yet controversial measure that does not assess the individual impact of the faculty member's article, but rather the average impact of all articles published in that particular journal. Moreover, impact factors vary depending upon the number of scholars publishing in the given field and do not necessarily reflect journal quality. The ARs specifically require an evaluation of the faculty member's original creative or scholarly contribution. The SACPT recommends that administrators and faculty involved in tenure and promotion recommendations be reminded not to use journal impact factors as a substitute for a more direct evaluation of the faculty member's work, such as would be accomplished by careful review of the letters by the external scholars. The importance of consideration of the entire dossier by the advisory committees cannot be over-stated. The basis for a recommendation to promote and/or grant tenure should not be limited to the examination of the cv and a quantitative database available on a library website.
2. The SACPT is concerned about the relatively high incidence of errors committed by unit administrators in assembling dossiers. The committee recommends that administrators be given training in the applicable ARs. One issue in particular is that consulted departmental faculty must be given the opportunity to read all of the outside letters, prior to writing their own letters of evaluation.