ACADEMIC SENATE 
of 
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY 
San Luis Obispo, CA 
AS-690-09 
RESOLUTION ON 
RETENTION PROMOTION AND TENURE FOCUS GROUP REPORT 

WHEREAS, The criteria for retention, promotion, and tenure decisions should be determined by 
the respective academic unit such as departments, colleges, and the library; and 

WHEREAS, The Research and Professional Development Committee of the Academic Senate 
during 2006/07 did a review of the retention, promotion, and tenure process for 
each college, and that report was a starting point for the focus group report; and 

WHEREAS, The Academic Senate is currently examining the definition of the Teacher-Scholar 
model and its implementation at Cal Poly; and 

WHEREAS, The process of evaluating candidates for retention, promotion, and tenure should 
be evaluated and updated as appropriate; and 

WHEREAS, The Research and Professional Development Committee of the Academic Senate 
has examined the report within its purview and with specific emphasis on research, 
professional development, creative activities, and related issues; therefore be it 

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate endorse recommendations 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9 
presented in the attached Retention Promotion and Tenure Focus Group Report 
(see pp. 5-8 of the report). 

Proposed by: Academic Senate Research and Professional 
Development Committee 
Date: May 1 2009 
Revised: May 19 2009
Overview

The Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Focus Group instituted by Provost Durgin was given the task to review the RPT procedures and policies throughout the University, to identify best practices and issues, and to make recommendations for areas of improvement. Faculty members and administrators with a broad range of experiences and diverse backgrounds were selected to participate in this focus group. The group began by reviewing campus policies, committee reports, and faculty survey results including the Collaborative On Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey conducted during the 2006-2007 academic year, the “Academic Senate Subcommittee on Research and Professional Development report to the Academic Senate” dated May 8, 2007, and the “Recommendations on Providing Workload Relief for the College of Engineering Faculty Engaged in Scholarly Activities”, January 4, 2007. The committee then identified a set of issues that affect probationary faculty members engaged in the RPT process and their ability to be successful as teacher-scholars at Cal Poly. Next, the committee reviewed RPT policies, criteria, and practices, identified best practices, and considered an electronic RPT evaluation process. Finally, the focus group compiled a set of recommendations included in this report to improve faculty success and the RPT policies, procedures, and processes at Cal Poly.

Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education

In winter 2007, Cal Poly participated in the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) project endorsed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The purpose of the project was to determine factors that are important to the success and job satisfaction of probationary faculty, as well as to enhance the programs that best serve the needs of new faculty members at Cal Poly. The COACHE survey was designed to solicit the perspectives of full-time, tenure-track faculty members and to study aspects of tenure and promotion, the nature of work, policies and practices, as well as culture, climate, and collegiality. Fifty-six universities across the country participate in the survey, including seven California State University Campuses- San Luis Obispo, Pomona, Fullerton, Long Beach, San Bernardino, San Marcos, and Sonoma State University.

The COACHE survey results indicate that the probationary faculty members at Cal Poly feel that the criteria for tenure in the area of professional development and service are less clear and reasonable as compared to the faculty members at the other institutions that participated in the survey. Specifically, faculty members from Cal Poly expressed lower satisfaction in the following areas:
1. Cal Poly faculty members rate the tenure standards (acceptable threshold) in their departments to be less clear than faculty members in the CSU and at other institutions (what is expected is clear and reasonable as a scholar, as a campus citizen, and as an advisor to students.)

2. Cal Poly faculty members report less satisfaction with resources and support for scholarly activities than faculty members in the CSU and at other institutions (time, number of courses, facilities, computing services, and research services.)

3. Cal Poly and CSU faculty members expressed concern over the effectiveness of a policy on the upper limit on teaching and service obligations and the balance between family and personal time.

4. Cal Poly faculty reports less satisfaction with opportunities for collaboration and professional interaction with senior faculty than faculty in the CSU and at other institutions.

The 2008 report of the Academic Senate Research and Professional Development Committee indicates that the understanding of the Teacher-Scholar Model needs strengthening on this campus and that at times there is a lack of consistency among various levels of review in applying the standards for tenure and promotion. Furthermore, this report indicates that the University should provide clearer guidance on the expectations for Professional Development Plans (PDP) and a process to approve and hold faculty members accountable to their plans. Peer advising and/or mentorship may provide an avenue for feedback as faculty members develop as teacher-scholars.

The Focus group reflected on the time demands of the probationary faculty. In order for faculty members to be successful as teacher-scholars, the group felt that probationary faculty should have sufficient time and resources to engage in scholarly activities, particularly during their first two years at Cal Poly. This sentiment was reinforced in the Research and Professional Development Committee’s report. Furthermore, the committee affirmed that reduced service obligations, a more efficient RPT process, and better guidance on preparing working personnel action files and professional development plans will increase faculty members' time for professional development.

**Best Practices**

The focus group identified several best practices that could be used to guide college and university recommendations. These practices include personnel policies and criteria processes, a practical definition of the Teacher-Scholar Model, faculty professional development support, digital archival of faculty work and accomplishments, faculty development, online student evaluations, and faculty mentoring. This section presents a brief overview of these best practices.

**Personnel Policies, Procedures, and Evaluation Criteria.** The College of Science and Mathematics “Personnel Policies Procedures and Evaluation Criteria” is an example of an efficient and consistent RPT process that has been established for all departments in the college. The focus group identified the following positive aspects of this document:

- Reduced the number of performance evaluations during the tenure process (Part III-B).
- Guidance on developing Working Personnel Action Files (WPAFs) for periodic reviews (Part IV-A) and for performance reviews (Part V-B).
- Example outline for preparing WPAFs (Appendix A).
- Criteria for reappointment, tenure, and promotion (Part V-D).
- Periodic review of newly promoted tenured associate professors in 3rd Year (Part VII-A).
• Procedures for student evaluations (Part X).
• Candidates for promotion are expected to submit a professional development plan with a plan to sustain their role as teacher-scholars.

The "Library Faculty Handbook of Personnel Policies and Procedures" Section III-4 provides an example of the evaluation criteria for other factors of consideration. This document provides an excellent discussion of collegiality, professionalism, and successful interaction with coworkers. The document states that, "Collegiality represents a reciprocal relationship among colleagues and a value system that views diverse members of a university community as critical for the progress and success of its academic mission.... Moreover, collegiality among associates involves appreciation of and respect for differences in expertise, ideas, background, and viewpoints."

**Teacher-Scholar Model.** The Orfalea College of Business' "Faculty Annual Report" (FAR) provides an approach to college-wide resource allocation based on a quantitative review of the accomplishments and the professional development plans of the faculty. The FAR document has also defined the Teacher-Scholar Model in a flexible way that allows faculty members to vary their emphasis on teaching, research and service throughout their careers. In the FAR evaluation process a weighting based on the faculty members' work emphasis is used in conjunction with an established numeric criteria to compute a composite score. The locus of service obligations changes from department to University as faculty members progress through the ranks. For example, tenured faculty members are often expected to serve on Peer Review Committees and in leadership positions within the department, college, and the University. The Orfalea College of Business uses an electronic tool, Digital Measures, to track faculty achievement and activities for resource allocation and accreditation purposes.

**Faculty Professional Development Support.** Recently, the College of Liberal Arts has established a system to support faculty members in their professional development and scholarly activities. Faculty members submit proposals to the College of Liberal Arts requesting one or more course release(s), student assistant support, or funds for travel that will enable them to bring their scholarly work to completion and present it to the community of scholars. The College provides some funds and support for course releases, and in some cases the College partners with departments to provide student assistant time and additional financial support for faculty professional development. At times, CLA has been able to support special unexpected faculty professional development opportunities in addition to their regularly supported activities. Examples of this supplemental support include a course release to finish a textbook, travel support to allow faculty members to present their work at prestigious invited engagements such as concerts or performances, and support for student assistance in the collection and analysis of research data. In several cases, resources are used to supplement partial support provided through the State Faculty Support Grant Program or other similar funding sources. The College of Liberal Arts reports that their support has been highly effective and not only has it enabled faculty members to be successful in their scholarly activities, but also the support has enhanced faculty morale and their sense of scholarly community within the college.

**Digital Repository of Faculty Work and Accomplishments.** Many universities use electronic tools to capture faculty accomplishments which can be used for dissemination of knowledge, accreditation, alumni communications, advancement, and RPT purposes. Cal Poly is in the process of implementing the Digital Commons to provide a repository for faculty work and accomplishments. Faculty members voluntarily enter their work into the Digital Commons to allow students, faculty members, staff, administrators, and the community to access their scholarly work through an electronic portfolio. The Digital Commons provides an example of an institutional repository capable of capturing information and making it available in an electronic
portfolio. There may be opportunities to apply information technology such as the Digital Commons to the RPT process and in some cases for program accreditation. Academic software tools such as Digital Measures may interface directly with the library's Digital Commons and if adopted this would create a seamless workflow from the college to the library, thus avoiding duplicate effort.

**Faculty Development.** The COACHE survey included custom questions used to solicit feedback on faculty support that is provided through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). 84%, 60%, and 29% of faculty reported that participating in CTL activities have strongly enhanced or somewhat enhanced their teaching, professional development, and service respectively. More strikingly 92%, 86%, and 58% of female faculty report that participating in CTL activities have strongly enhanced or somewhat enhanced their teaching, professional development, and service respectively. These results indicate that the majority of probationary faculty members find that their involvement in CTL has benefited their teaching and professional development. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of female faculty report that their involvement with CTL has enhanced their teaching, professional development, and service to the University.

**Online Student Evaluations.** Information provided through student evaluations is of particular interest to the University since the data provides both formative feedback that can be used to improve teaching effectiveness and summative feedback used for personnel actions. Some departments in the College of Liberal Arts have been using online student evaluations for their online courses and are interested in exploring the use of online student evaluations in face-to-face courses. The CSU, CFA, and Academic Senate CSU formed a joint committee to investigate student evaluations in response to Article 15.19 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement dated May 15, 2007. This committee was charged to study the “best and most effective practices for the student evaluation of faculty teaching effectiveness.” The study evaluated instruments used for student evaluation and the use of online student evaluations. The committee documented their findings in the “Report on Student Evaluations of Teaching,” dated March 12, 2008. This report provides suggestions for implementing online student evaluations and interpreting the results of these evaluations. Furthermore, the report encourages campuses to carry out research to assess the validity and reliability of online student evaluations.

San Diego State University conducted a two-year formal study of online student evaluations during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 academic years. Their study investigated the response rate and mean ratings for traditional and online student evaluations conducted for courses in the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts. Paper and pencil and online student evaluation results from forty-four courses that used five instruments with 5,972 respondents were analyzed. The results of this study are documented in the “EDTEC 798: Independent Study – Effort Report.” The results of this study show that online student evaluations generated higher response rates for four of the five instruments analyzed. The researcher notes that the form that did not demonstrate a higher online response rate had the smallest sample size: two courses with 176 responses. The aggregate response rate for online evaluations was 82% as compared to 73% for paper and pencil evaluations. No significant difference was found in the mean ratings for online versus paper and pencil evaluations: 4.238 and 4.294 respectively.

San Jose State University’s “Interpretation Guide for Student Opinions of Teaching Effectiveness” documents a method to normalize the student evaluation results by departments and colleges so that valid comparisons can be made. The affects of grade level, course size, and major versus non-major courses were also analyzed. This report provides insight and methods that can be used to gather and interpret student evaluation data. These methods could be used to compare traditional and online student evaluations and to help the University transition to online student evaluations.
**Faculty Mentoring.** The College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences has developed a formal faculty mentoring program for their faculty. This is a volunteer mentoring program that has evolved over a period of seven years. The college mentoring program coordinator meets with interested faculty members in the fall quarter to explain the mentoring program and the roles and responsibilities of the faculty involved. Faculty members wishing to be mentored fill out a survey to identify specific areas of interest. These areas of interest include teaching, professional development, establishing a research program, faculty advising, Cal Poly culture, or other faculty defined topics. Similarly, faculty mentors fill out a form that includes their strengths and identifies the areas that they feel qualified and comfortable mentoring faculty members. The mentoring program coordinator then pairs mentees with mentors and asks them to work together to define their expectations, goals, and plan to accomplish these goals. The program coordinator tracks the mentoring relationships and coordinates a recognition event in the spring quarter for the faculty participants.

Several faculty members have reported benefits from the program and several faculty members who have been mentored later become mentors themselves. The program coordinator commented on non-traditional pairings such as an instance when a senior faculty member requested mentoring for the use of technology in his classroom and was paired with a junior faculty member who was a technology expert. The mentoring program coordinator plans to formally evaluate the impact of the program using survey instruments in the near future.

**Committee Recommendations**

This section presents a list of recommendations identified by the committee and an implementation table that includes champions and a rough timeline to guide the implementation. The first five recommendations focus on enhancing University and college procedures, and the remaining six recommendations include suggestions to clarify, support, and evaluate faculty professional development, teaching, and service accomplishments.

1. **The University should provide clear guidelines and a common format for the Working Personnel Action File (WPAF).** A common format will facilitate the preparation and review of Working Personnel Action Files. The committee recommends that the University standardize a template of required materials which should be submitted in a small binder and allow faculty members to submit additional supporting materials in a separate binder as needed. The small binder would include a summary of teaching and work assignments, student evaluations, a list of scholarly activities and research projects, and service activities.

2. **Each college should establish common faculty evaluation procedures to be used for all departments within the college.** Many departments within a college have similar but different RPT procedures. This adds to confusion of probationary faculty members within a college and unnecessarily complicates the work of the college peer review committee which is required to review and understand the documents for all of the departments they review. Departments should use the college procedures and amplify the college criteria used to evaluate teaching, professional development, and service within the discipline.

3. **The University should recommend that colleges consider the multiyear appointment procedure for probationary faculty that has been developed by the College of Science and Mathematics.** The multiyear appointment procedure developed by CSM allows three 2-year appointments for probationary faculty. In the first year of each two year appointment a periodic review is conducted to provide faculty formative feedback as they make progress
towards promotion and tenure. During probationary years two and four, summative performance reviews are conducted for retention to a subsequent two-year appointment. In year six, faculty members undergo a performance review for promotion and tenure. This procedure reduces the time faculty members spend preparing voluminous WPAF files for performance reviews, as well as the time faculty members and administrators spend reviewing materials, while providing formative feedback each year to help develop and prepare the faculty to be successful as teacher-scholars.

4. The implementation of an online student evaluation pilot program in the College of Liberal Arts and the Orfalea College of Business to study and evaluate the effectiveness, benefits, and disadvantages of online student evaluation. Online student evaluations have been successfully implemented University-wide at San Diego State University with no significant decrease in response rate or change in mean ratings. Online student evaluations provide a convenient mechanism for students to provide feedback of teaching effectiveness, do not take time from course instruction, and give all students an opportunity to submit feedback. The data collected via online student evaluations can be stored directly into an electronic database or faculty e-portfolio. On-line student evaluations significantly reduce the time required to prepare and process evaluation packages by the department staff, faculty, and ITS. Online student evaluations allow easily customizable instruments that may include common questions defined by the University, college, department and/or instructor. Electronic reports can automatically normalize or scale the results by factors such as course level, modes of instruction, enrollment, or major versus non-major course. Thus electronic data analysis and interpretation of student evaluations may better inform instructors and reviewers of faculty teaching effectiveness. The Provost should designate a committee to develop an RFP, evaluate potential vendors, and report recommendations to the Deans' Council. Members of the vendor selection committee should include a college dean or associate dean, and representatives from the Academic Senate, Academic Personnel, ITS, and the Library.

5. The University should explore the use of electronic faculty evaluation processes and set up a pilot process in one college. Several software tools are available that facilitate electronic review of faculty members via e-portfolios; the committee briefly reviewed the Activity Insight software package from Digital Measures. There appear to be several advantages to using an e-portfolio for faculty evaluations. These advantages include extracting and archiving information directly from University databases such as teaching assignments, grading patterns, student evaluation results, and scholarly work included in the Digital Commons; consistent organization, categorization, and presentation of materials; the ability to run reports and summarize data electronically; and electronic control over the evaluation process (online access to personnel files, deadline notification, verification of process requirements, automatic WPAF access logs, and security to protect personnel information). The Provost should designate a committee to develop an RFP, evaluate potential vendors, and report recommendations to the Deans' Council. Members of the vendor selection committee should include a college dean or associate dean, and representatives from the Academic Senate, Academic Personnel, ITS, and the Library.

6. The University should produce a comprehensive statement on scholarship and professional development to reflect the University's vision of the Teacher-Scholar Model. This statement should define the Teacher-Scholar Model within the context of Cal Poly and it should be in concert with the Teacher-Scholar section of the WASC self-study and the various other University documents on this subject. The statement will provide guidance to faculty members as they develop as teacher-scholars at Cal Poly and should include the benefits of the Teacher-Scholar Model to the students, faculty and the University.
7. **The University should establish guidelines to assist faculty in the development of Professional Development Plans to encompass teaching, scholarship/professional development, and service, and to clarity the method by which they will report the progress they have made toward their goals.** Probationary faculty members are expected to write and maintain Professional Development Plans (PDP) that communicate their scholarly goals and state what they intend to accomplish by the time they are considered for tenure and promotion. The PDP should include a timeline for activities that support their tenure and promotion requests, short- and long-term goals, scholarly activities of substantial quality, and intended external validation of their work. In addition, the University should define a common process for faculty to submit Professional Development Plans, gain the endorsement of their peers and approval by their dean/provost, update and archive the plans as they progress, and define how faculty members report their accomplishments against their plans in the RPT process. Candidates for promotion should be expected to submit a five-year plan indicating how they will sustain their development as teacher-scholars.

8. **The University should establish an environment and develop the resources to support faculty members in their endeavor to become successful teacher-scholars.** Policies should include reduced teaching and service assignments for new faculty members to allow them to focus on developing their teaching and scholarly activities as they begin their careers at Cal Poly. Deans should dedicate funds to provide assigned time for scholarly activities. Departments should be encouraged to schedule courses such that faculty members have blocks of time to focus on scholarly activities.

9. **Specific criteria and expectations regarding service should be included in college RPT guidelines.** The COACHE survey indicates that the University should better define the service expectations for tenure. A lack of clarity of criteria leads to misaligned priorities and unnecessary anxiety for the faculty. The college RPT documents should include a discussion about the expectation of service contributions and the roles and responsibilities of faculty members as they progress from assistant to full professor.

10. **The University or colleges should articulate a policy indicating how learning assessment can be linked to teaching, service, professional development, or some combination of them all.** Faculty members have a significant role in learning assessment for the courses they teach, program curricula, program accreditation, and the scholarship of teaching. Currently college and department RPT documents are silent and ambiguous on faculty expectations in the area of learning assessment. Clarity of faculty expectations with respect to learning assessment will lead to a better understanding and implementation of learning assessment.

11. **The University or colleges should provide direction for faculty members to better evaluate teaching effectiveness.** Peer Review Committee evaluators need guidance in how to best determine if instructors are effective teachers. Examples might include evaluating the instructor's process of defining learning outcomes for their courses, developing appropriate measures to assess learning, and developing course content and activities that achieve student learning. All faculty members should include the course learning outcomes in their syllabi so that teaching effectiveness can be evaluated against course learning outcomes. Quantitative data related to teaching effectiveness such as student evaluations, grade distributions, and other relevant evaluative parameters should be standardized. Student evaluation surveys could be rewritten to place greater importance on learning and the instructor's role in facilitating student learning in order to better assist faculty members in evaluating effective teaching and learning. In accordance with the MOU requirement to consult with the faculty of a department or equivalent unit, college deans should address the expectation of
probationary faculty to evaluate all courses and amend college guidelines accordingly. Colleges should expect probationary faculty to include a constructive narrative statement reflecting and interpreting the results of their student evaluations.

Recommendation Implementation Table

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10. Digital Measures Website: http://www.digitalmeasures.com/