

The EFIB's Committee Governance: What Does it Mean?

Reports are now circulating that the EFIB department selected the committee governance option that includes the chair, George Carter. The other members elected to that committee governance model are Mark Klinedinst and James Lindley.

Because this option has not often been selected in the past, USMPRIDE.COM investigators launched a search of the details regarding this option. What we have found to date is presented below, along with analysis.

As the following snapshot indicates, personnel and evaluation procedures are described in Chapter 8 of the USM Faculty Handbook:

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CHAPTER 8

FACULTY EVALUATION PROCEDURES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Personnel evaluations involving the academic staff of The University of Southern Mississippi are subject to specific procedures. The Board of Trustees mandates that *all* University personnel recommendations be based upon written evaluation procedures, with a general description of the procedures being filed with the Board.¹ This chapter explains the University's personnel evaluation procedures, identifies the administrative officers and entities that conduct personnel evaluations, and describes the process of institutional review and recourse applicable to personnel evaluations.

The two procedures most commonly thought of with regard to personnel at a university are promotion/tenure and annual evaluation. The USM Faculty Handbook is no exception in this regard, as the beginning of Section 8.2 below suggests:

8.2 EVALUATION POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES

8.2.1 Annual Evaluations. Annual evaluations shall be conducted for all members of the Corps of Instruction.

8.2.2 Tenure Assessments. Tenure Assessments (or third-year reviews) are a variety of annual evaluations that require action by the Provost. Under the leadership of the department chair, tenured faculty in an academic unit shall conduct tenure assessments for all tenure track faculty.

Getting more to the heart of the specific case of EFIB's 2006-07 choice, we turned to the policies regarding the "Departmental Personnel Committee" governance option presented in the Handbook:

8.3 THE DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

8.3.1 Committee Membership. All members of departmental Corps of Instruction with a minimum of three (3) years of service with the University and who hold the rank of associate professor or higher are eligible for committee membership. The Departmental Personnel Committee shall consist of three (3) standing members elected by the department faculty. The faculty may or may not choose to elect the department chair to the committee. Alternatively, the faculty may elect to have the department chair serve in lieu of the committee. In such cases, the chair will function as the committee. Only those faculty members who have achieved tenure may evaluate a colleague seeking an award of tenure. Likewise, promotions may be considered only by faculty holding a rank equal to or higher than the rank being considered.

8.3.2 Faculty Ineligible for Membership. Faculty holding appointment within an academic department and serving as University administrative officers in the positions of President, Provost, vice president, and dean of the college or director of the school or division in which a department is organized may not sit as members of Departmental Personnel Committees. Staff members employed with a fractional FTE are ineligible. Faculty members holding honorary rank, employed on a terminal contract, or who are otherwise excluded for reasons specified in the rules governing the several departmental personnel proceedings are ineligible.

8.3.3 Replacement of Committee Members. If a committee member resigns, dies, or otherwise relinquishes the committee position, another eligible faculty member within the department must be elected in the same manner that the original members were chosen.

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The text above supports the EFIB's selection of Klinedinst and Lindley as 2/3 of the governance committee, to serve alongside Chairman Carter. Section 8.3.4 concerns the Committee's functions, as described below:

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8.3.4 Committee Functions. The Departmental Personnel Committee conducts annual performance reviews, tenure assessments, promotion proceedings, and tenure deliberations. The committee also makes recommendations to the dean on promotions in academic rank, renewal or non-renewal of employment, dismissal, or termination of employment. The Departmental Personnel Committees also evaluate and make recommendations to responsible academic deans on applications from members of the departmental faculty for academic leaves of absence and sabbaticals.

Written reports resulting from annual evaluations conducted by Departmental Personnel Committees may be used by other departmental, college, and University administrative bodies and officers conducting deliberations regarding the renewal and non-renewal of employment, dismissal from employment, promotion in academic rank, tenure assessment, and the award of academic tenure.

As the paragraphs above indicate, the committee plays a large role in all personnel activities in the CoB, including, but not limited to, participating in the annual evaluation process and making separate recommendations for academic leave/sabbatical.

One of the primary duties of the Departmental Personnel Committees is to participate in annual performance reviews, as covered in Section 8.4 of the Handbook:

8.4 THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Section 8.4.2 of the Handbook presents the Review Guidelines:

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8.4.2 Review Guidelines. The following guidelines apply to all Annual Performance Reviews conducted by Department Personnel Committees:

Guideline “c” addresses how non-administrative members of the Departmental Personnel Committee are to be evaluated in terms of teaching, research and service:

- (c) Department chairs must evaluate the faculty serving on the personnel committee.

In the case of EFIB, Chairman Carter will evaluate Klinedinst and Lindley, just as he would've done in past years. How will Carter's teaching, research and service be evaluated?

- (d) Department chairs must be evaluated in the categories of research, teaching, and service, but not as administrators. The chairs' supervising administrative officers conduct administrative evaluations. The other members of the departmental Personnel Committee will evaluate department chairs in the categories of research, teaching, and service.

As guideline “d” above indicates, Dean Harold Doty will evaluate Carter's administrative performance, while Klinedinst and Lindley will evaluate Carter's teaching, research and service activities. But, their duties do not end there, as the following passage states:

- (e) University administrative officers (other than department chairs) who hold faculty rank will be evaluated in the categories of research, teaching, and service by the Department Personnel Committees of the academic departments in which they serve as faculty. The supervising administrative officers will conduct administrative evaluations.

Guideline “e” above indicates that Associate Dean Farhang Niroomand’s teaching, research and service will each be evaluated by the three-person Departmental Personnel Committee representing the EFIB. This means that Carter, Klinedinst and Lindley will evaluate Niroomand across the three aforementioned academic areas.

Guideline “i” indicates that, in addition to evaluating other members of the EFIB, the EFIB’s Personnel Committee will also evaluate all parties holding academic appointment in the department:

- (i) Parties holding academic appointment are evaluated by the Departmental Personnel Committees if any part of their salary is budgeted in that department and part of their assigned duties is to that department.

Guideline “i” would include Professors Canterbury, Lambert, and Shi.

Now that rank-and-file professors are involved in conducting personnel review, scheduling conflicts will likely arise. The Handbook addresses those with:

8.4.3 Review Procedure. Annual Performance Reviews will be scheduled at the convenience of all involved parties, taking into account teaching schedules, other University-related duties, and professional commitments. Personal commitments and commitments related to employment outside the University are generally considered insufficient grounds for scheduling or rescheduling performance review conferences.

So, Carter, Niroomand and Doty are tasked to work to accommodate the schedules of Professors Klinedinst and Lindley throughout the academic 2006-07 year.

In order to conduct annual evaluation reviews, Klinedinst and Lindley will need a substantial amount of information, as the Handbook suggests:

Annual Performance Reviews consist of two (2) steps. The first step is the information stage, where the faculty member has the opportunity to provide information to the Department Personnel Committee regarding the employee's professional growth and accomplishments during the evaluation period. Parties to be evaluated will submit their Faculty Activity Report¹, curricula vitae, and any other additional supporting materials to the department chair and personnel committee at least two (2) weeks before scheduled evaluation conferences. The parties to be evaluated must also submit a detailed written statement of their professional goals and objectives for the coming year. The information process must be based on objective evidence. Examples of objective evidence include, but are not limited to:

Not only will Klinedinst and Lindley assist Carter with faculty development plans, they will require access to faculty vitae and other information to assess

annual performance. In the CoB, SEDONA is the single-source of all faculty research and service performance information. This means that Klinedinst and Lindley will need to visit with SEDONA Coordinator Donna Davis so that she can give them authorization to access all of the CoB's SEDONA records.

On the teaching side, the passage below from the Handbook states that Klinedinst and Lindley will require access to all faculty teaching evaluations information:

Examples of objective evidence include, but are not limited to:

- (a) University-mandated teaching evaluations devised by department faculty and approved by responsible University administrative officers;
- (b) supporting materials affecting the interpretation of teaching evaluations (e.g., syllabi, course levels, degree of difficulty of courses taught, grades awarded, etc.), written standards of interpretation being established by departmental faculty;

A proper evaluation of teaching also includes course difficulty and grade distributions, as item "b" indicates. Thus, the EFIB's committee will need access to course grade distributions by faculty/course.

In terms of appraisal, the Faculty Personnel Committee will evaluate EFIB faculty in conjunction with the evaluations of other CoB faculty/personnel. The scan of the Handbook below indicates that the evaluations conducted near the end of 2006-07 will go as they would under a chair-only governance structure, except that each faculty member's evaluation form will be signed by Carter, Klinedinst and Lindley instead of a single person (Chair).

The second stage of evaluation conferences is the appraisal stage, focusing on personal and professional strengths and weaknesses affecting employment and establishing goals and objectives to be pursued by employees during upcoming evaluation period. During this step, the Departmental Personnel Committee evaluates the faculty member on the basis of information provided by the faculty member, peer evaluators, and such other objective or subjective information the committee deems relevant. When conducting evaluations, the Departmental Personnel Committee shall measure performance of teaching, research, and service responsibilities according to the unitary standards and criteria established for evaluation, promotion, and tenure. When evaluating instructors, the Departmental Personnel Committee shall consider performance in the appropriate, agreed upon categories of responsibilities as the standard for evaluation as described in the unitary standards and criteria for promotion. The Departmental Personnel Committee's evaluation will be recorded in an Annual Performance Review Report.

That's all for now. Future reports at USMPRIDE.COM will address issues related to the EFIB's new governance model.