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## Requiring Faculty Members to Submit Applications for External Grants as a Criterion for Tenure and Promotion.

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# Requiring Faculty Members to Submit Applications for External Grants as a Criterion for Tenure and Promotion.

Submitted by: Clara Krug/Senate Executive Committee

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4/14/2011

## Question:

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1. Is it a violation of academic freedom for a college to require specific outcomes for tenure and promotion? (Please refer to The Faculty Handbook, Section 201, and to Resolutions #1-#4 presented by the Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Governance and adopted by the Faculty Senate on February 17 and March 22, 2011.)

2. a. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for tenure, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired?

b. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for promotion, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired?

## Rationale:

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Faculty members in all units are affected by policies for promotion and tenure.

## Response:

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A Request for a Motion: Requiring Faculty to Show Evidence of Applying for External Funding for Purposes of Tenure, Promotion, Post-Tenure Review and/or Yearly Evaluations is a Violation of Academic Freedom: Georgia Southern University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors. This request for a motion came from the Georgia Southern chapter of the AAUP. The request stated that "Requiring

faculty to show evidence of applying for external funding for purposes of tenure, promotion, post-tenure review and/or yearly evaluations is a violation of academic freedom.”

Please note that the SEC revised this request to a Request for Discussion; the AAUP then withdrew its request.

The request read as follows: “We move that the Faculty Senate of Georgia Southern University approve the following resolution: The AAUP Resolution. Motion: We resolve the following: That requiring faculty to show evidence of applying for external funding for purposes of tenure, promotion, post tenure review and/or yearly evaluation is a violation of academic freedom. Any restriction on the kind and nature of faculty research violates the hallmark of academic inquiry, the unfettered pursuit of knowledge. Violations of Academic Freedom affect all faculty in every college.” The rationale behind the request stated that “Faculty members in all units are affected by policies for promotion and tenure.” The SEC declined to include this as a motion, but wanted it to be included it as a discussion.

The President of the AAUP Chapter at Georgia Southern was informed of that decision and he indicated that the AAUP preferred that their motion be a motion and that it not be a discussion item. He then asked the SEC to withdraw the motion/discussion item from the agenda. Chair Krug stated that “the SEC had two major concerns” which would be discussed at a later point in the agenda. 1. Is it a violation of academic freedom for a college to require specific outcomes for tenure and promotion? (Please refer to The Faculty Handbook, Section 201, and to Resolutions #1-#4 presented by the Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Governance and adopted by the Faculty Senate [on February 17 and March 22, 2011.]) 2. a. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for tenure, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired? A Request for Discussion: Requiring Faculty Members to Submit Applications for External Grants as a Criterion for Tenure and Promotion: The SEC

Clara Krug (CLASS), Senate Moderator introduced the first question by mentioning that there “was an Academic Freedom Committee composed of faculty members in 1998” that reviewed the AAUP Redbook and developed the Preamble and the Academic Freedom statement included in the beginning of the Faculty Handbook. 1. Is it a violation of academic freedom for a college to require specific outcomes for tenure and promotion, such as writing grant proposals and receiving funding?

Frederic Mynard (COST), noting that the AAUP’s motion request was withdrawn, suggested that the current question might be too vague. He said, “Of course, requiring specific outcomes is not a problem [and] it is expected that specific outcomes are going to be requested. It doesn’t mean that any outcome should be acceptable.” He noted a possible contradiction with the shared governance resolutions passed at the last meeting in which it was made clear that tenure and promotion guidelines are

established at the departmental level. “At the college level, all such guidelines should not be imposed as a blanket thing on every unit within the college.”

Pat Humphrey (COST) agreed that colleges “shouldn’t be putting down requirements that supersede our new President’s clear statement and Provost’s statement that tenure and promotion decisions belong with departmental criteria because those are the people most able to evaluate somebody’s work.” However, based on her experience in COST, the policy in her college only requires that one apply for external funding, not that they necessarily receive it. She also noted that in COST, the policy “was voted on and approved by the faculty of the college. To me that’s shared governance.”

Frederic Mynard (COST) agreed, but also pointed out that the departments establish the tenure and promotion guidelines. He said, “There are disciplines where ...it is not reasonable to expect [external funding] and people are going to object to [requirements to do so].” The requirements might have received a majority of the votes in the college “even though a number of departments unanimously rejected [the college requirements to apply for external funding].” b. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for promotion, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired?

Moderator Clara Krug (CLASS) asked for an example for clarification. Mynard (COST) suggested that one compare Biology, where “it is difficult to expect any research to be done without funding,” but in Mathematics, “there is absolutely no need for funding to conduct your research ...this is something you don’t need to conduct your research.” He also pointed out that the process of applying for grants is time consuming and takes faculty away from their research.

Rob Yarbrough (COST) agreed and pointed out that there situations in COST where such requirements are actually counterproductive. Jamie Woods (CLASS) agreed that such rules were likely counterproductive and pointed out that although he had just completed his third book, he did not receive outside funding nor had he applied.

Michelle Reidel (COE) raised concerns related to academic freedom. She suggested that the process of applying for grants requires a researcher to shape the questions in a way that satisfies external evaluators.

President Brooks Keel (President) asked Professor Reidel (COE) if she was “required to publish in peer review journals?” Professor Reidel said, “Yes, and I understand that what you’re saying is that there are standards, but there is a difference between having standards in a peer review journal [and an] RFP that says it must be about this topic in order to get funding.” President Keel explained that it was his understanding that it is “not a requirement to respond to a Request For Proposals (RFP), but [a requirement] to submit a grant.” He continued, “The issue of academic freedom” pertained to whether or not “requiring external reviewers to pass judgment on whether or not your grant gets funded is a violation of academic freedom.” If it is, “then the next logical extension would be to prohibit peer review publications because the exact same thing happens here as

well. You are required to get external reviewers to review your publication of research to get accepted in the journals.”

Professor Reidel (COE) suggested that there was a difference, as a researcher would still have to “twist and distort what [the researcher] interested in so that it fits the RFP” as a requirement for tenure. On the other hand, peer-reviewed articles allow the researcher to frame the question as she or he sees fit. President Keel disagreed. Rob Yarbrough (COST) pointed out that the discussion was now considering ideas that were in the AAUP’s original motion. “[A]s much as I appreciate the SEC putting the issue on the agenda, I think the specific thing we seem to be discussing now is actually this very specific policy [that was included in the original motion].” Moderator Krug (CLASS) explained that the SEC put the topic on the agenda to “see if it was narrow or broad.” Professor Yarbrough (COST) argued that “The issue is not so much about an idea of external review as it is about what specific funding agencies that fall under this external category.” He noted that there are many agencies and the COST policy is not specific, except that it has to be external. He continued to point out that there are many, many more journals than there are funding agencies. In addition, it is often unnecessary for people to receive funding in some disciplines. Laura Valeri (CLASS) pointed out that in her field, there are many journals, but only “very, very limited [external] funding opportunities and it would certainly ...hijack my research or creative activity if I were to [apply for external funding].” She added that she thought a “a little bit disingenuous to say that we only have to apply to a grant, and not expect to get it.” Pat Walker (CLASS) echoed Professor Yarbrough’s points, saying that there are “many vehicles for [faculty] to get external reviews of the research that they do. ...[T]he question is, if one has to...apply for a grant, then you have to focus your research...on what could perhaps receive a grant.” The situation is different for external reviews, a process which “doesn’t really change the content of what people are focusing their research on.”

Tim Teeter (CLASS) brought up academic freedom, making a distinction between a discussion about a specific tenure and promotion policy versus the broader dimensions of the discussion. Perhaps this is just “not a good policy?” he asked. Fred Mynard (COST) added that the conversation has compared grant proposals and peer-reviewed journal articles, “but the grant proposal is not the actual research, so there is a fundamental difference between the actual research being reviewed and reviewing your project of potential research.” Moreover, he pointed out that faculty are in favor of externally-supported research, but “there are cases where forcing people to seek external support is not supporting the research. It is counterproductive to what is actually produced because it takes time away with no reasonable positive output to envision.” In this way, it is related to academic freedom, “because the time that is devoted to your research...[is taken away] to fill in the box, [to] push papers to produce some kind of grant proposal. ..[T]he result might be that in many cases something very mediocre is produced simply for the sake of [a requirement]. This not something that we should be happy with.” Based on his experience on the Faculty Research Committee, Norman Schmidt (COST) appreciated that the requirements for what is required for

research varied greatly from department to department and college to college. While noting the concerns regarding academic freedom, he also pointed out that the Office of Research Services provides assistance to faculty who are in search of external funding. He said, “[W]e don’t want to limit academic freedom, but we want to promote research to the fullest extent here at Georgia Southern.” 2. a. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for tenure, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired? James Woods (CLASS) wondered if there might be a legal problem with changing the criteria mid-stream? Moderator Krug (CLASS) replied that the SEC did not ask the question with legal questions in mind, although she did suggest that Laura Copeland might be able to shed some light on that aspect. The SEC was more concerned with issues related to fairness Pat Walker (CLASS) responded that it was her understanding that the “policies in place when a person is hired would be used for their next review.” She wondered what the Faculty Handbook had to say regarding changes to the criteria at post-tenure review.

Moderator Krug (CLASS) replied that the departments were now looking into the issue. Pat Humphrey (COST) suggested that this lack of clarity might be “part of the problem.” She noted that with the recent changes in leadership and the increased research expectations, “a lot of people are a little bit scared that what they’ve been doing up until now... may no longer be good enough.” She expressed concern that the standards might increase without giving faculty enough time to react. In other words, the standards are going from here to here with possibly not enough time to react.

Provost Ted Moore thanked Professor Humphrey for her concerns. He noted that this “uncertainty is something that we’re keenly aware of, and this is something that we need to address.” He stressed the importance of working with the Senate and the VP of Research to “reduce as much of this uncertainty as we can.” In response to other aspects of the discussion regarding criteria and how they might change, Provost Moore noted that the some faculty handbooks state explicitly “that you would be evaluated under the criteria that were in force at the time of hire.” However, they also state that for “subsequent promotions beyond Associate Professor, ....after tenure, the rules that would be applied basically were the ones that were in force at the time the application is made.” He stated that “the courts have basically ceded that to the academic community. Noting that universities across the country are wrestling with these issues, Provost Moore promised to “to have a lot of conversation on this to improve that clarity and reduce some of the uncertainty and the anxiety that exists right now.” Moderator Krug (CLASS) asked Provost Moore if Georgia Southern could adopt such policies for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook? Provost Moore replied, “Yes, you could. I believe you could and I believe you would be on legal grounds,” assuming that due process is observed. b. When evaluating a faculty member who applies for promotion, may a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired? Moderator Krug (CLASS) stated that based on the conversation taking place, it seemed that the conclusion was that “the promotion criteria might change.” Is that correct, she asked.

Rob Yarbrough (COST) replied that the bulk of the conversation regarded a situation in which “a department or college apply criteria other than those in place when the faculty member was hired.” He asked if anyone could speak to the issue of whether a department or college “may” change the criteria. Dean Mike Smith (CLASS) responded that “[Y]es, the college may. In fact, perhaps our college is the most recent to have changed its college-level tenure and promotion guidelines. Having done that last year, and we actually researched this question itself before we made those changes as to whether or not they were in extant university level policy on this question, and there is not. And so the policy that we adopted as a college in the absence of a university policy is essentially the policy that Dr. Moore just articulated.” Ming Fang He (COE) asked if the current criteria considered the issue of “diverse modes of inquiry in different disciplines.” She noted that prominent and influential educational theorists have had a difficult time getting external grants because their work challenged educational policy. She asked President Keel and Provost Moore to keep this in mind as they considered these issues. Moderator Krug (CLASS) closed the discussion and reminded those in attendance that according to Robert’s Rules of Order, it is not possible to make a motion related to a discussion item at the same meeting, but it was possible at subsequent meetings. Rob Yarbrough (COST) asked Moderator Krug if she could explain “Why the SEC decided not to approve the original AAUP motion so that people that may be considering a motion along these lines would know what to avoid in the future?”

Moderator Krug (CLASS) responded that there “was an awful lot of information in the rationale about the AAUP, rather than about Georgia Southern, as I remember it.” She continued, based on the additional discussion at today’s meeting, “there might be [an opportunity for] a more refined motion” to be developed. James Woods (CLASS) noted that “Dean Mike Smith, from my own college, pointed out very succinctly and correctly that there’s no university policy regarding tenure and promotion and thus the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences did come up with one. My question to this body is should there be a policy put out by the Faculty Senate on what is tenure and promotion?” President Keel responded that “It seems to me that that’s already been addressed. This body put together a task force that looked at Shared Governance on this very issue. I thought they did a stellar job at putting it together and essentially what they said was that to make things consistent across the University which is what I believe you’re getting at is that each college should develop their own set of bylaws which would, in fact, be put in place by the very faculty that make up those colleges. It seems to me that we’re rehashing things that have just been evaluated and I think evaluated in an exceptionally fine form. This is a college decision to make. And as long as a particular college doesn’t come up with some bizarre circumstance in which case the Provost or I would not allow that to go forward, it should be left up to the college, the colleges. It’s in the best position to determine what’s more appropriate for their respective departments and the department’s in the best position to know within the discipline what methods should be used to reach a particular bar.”