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The 2002-2003 edition of the "Faculty Senate Handbook" (p.25) specifies required composition of departmental committees which review applications for Promotion and tenure.

Submitted by: Clara Krug

8/28/2002

**Question:**

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The 2002-2003 edition of the "Faculty Senate Handbook" (p.25) specifies required composition of departmental committees which review applications for Promotion and tenure. The 2001-2002 edition (p. 23) does not specify required composition. When did this required composition become policy? Who decided? P.S. I am submitting this on August 28, however I cannot enter the date in the specified space.

**Rationale:**

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1. Promotion and tenure policies affect faculty in all five colleges and the library.
2. Isn't it one of the Senate's responsibilities to consider proposed revisions to the handbook?

**Senate Response:**

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**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**September 17, 2002**

**Old Business**

Krug noted that a colleague requested that she ask what a faculty member applying for tenure can do if a Dean does not apply department criteria. This question arose from the Faculty Senate minutes of November 28, 2001, in which she noted President Grube as saying that the departmental criteria on is hired under, not university criteria, should remain in effect until the first personnel action, and therefore he doubted the tenure and promotion guidelines document or the *Handbook* of which it is part needed a grandfather clause; Krug noted that then-Senate Librarian Laura Davidson listened to the tapes and had confirmed these statements were made by President Grube. The colleague who prompted Krug's question has been told by his/her Dean that instead of

the department criteria in place when this individual came to Georgia Southern, there will be different criteria applicable.

Provost Vandegrift believed that President Grube's November 28, 2001, remarks mean that the promotion and tenure criteria being considered at the time were only clarifications of existing University criteria; departments and colleges would not need to rewrite their criteria as long as those were not inconsistent with University criteria. Vandegrift suggested the issue was not the criteria, but how the criteria in the University *Faculty Handbook* are applied in each case. Krug suggested the Provost's interpretation did not address what the President had said about department criteria at hiring time trumping University criteria. Provost Vandegrift said department criteria had to be interpreted in the context of the University criteria and be consistent with them. If the Dean in question is doing this, there is no problem.

President Grube added this: "On a different, but a very related point, since this is a deliberative body, you know, I will express a point of view, from time to time in here, and that does not mean that what I say is policy. I wish I could have my own way all the time, but that's pretty unlikely, but I will express a view, but unless this body adopts it and recommends it, and you know, we make it a University policy that is all that it is. And so, Clara, I don't know if maybe that was what was going on in the spirit of the conversation. We were talking about an issue and I was expressing a particular point of view, too, which is now informing the conversation. But there are ways things get into policy and they are not by me saying something in public which is only intended, you know, as a singular kind of contribution to the conversation."

Ann Pratt (COST) suggested that much of the problem may be that Deans are taking what are called in the *Handbook* "typical" times for faculty members to go for tenure or promotion and applying them as minimum times, when those times may not be the times stated in departmental guidelines or be typical for a particular department. Provost Vandegrift noted that intense Senate discussion had led to the use of the term "typical," and that this means there can be exceptions under exceptional circumstances, though Deans sticking strictly to the "typical years" guidelines may believe they are expressing the will of the Senate. The Provost added that President Grube's comments in no way conflicted with the criteria of the *Handbook* or were somehow at odds with the relationship of those criteria to departmental criteria. The Provost further added: "Literally, no department has a prescription on how to get tenure, you know, two of these, four of those, one of these, so many of that, that's not what we seek at Georgia Southern and that's not what we have endorsed, either as a University in the Senate [Faculty] *Handbook* or at the department levels. Ultimately, there is a quality decision made about the application of the criteria, and that quality decision I think is very much influenced by the department and the faculty as they make recommendations to the Dean. And I think that's where we are with respect to the *Handbook* language."

Marc Cyr (CLASS) asked whether, if a hiring-time document listed a lesser number of years as "minimum" time for a personnel action than is now listed as a "typical" time, would that not be an exception that the new "typical" language cannot make void?

Provost Vandegrift did not quite understand the question; Cyr clarified that neither he nor, he thought, anyone else had suggested bad faith on the part of Deans, but only that Deans may not understand that they have some leeway regarding promotion and tenure timelines. Provost Vandegrift answered: "Where language is subject to a reasonable interpretation then people can make a reasonable case, and that's with respect to the promotion time. With respect, again, to the criteria for tenure, if that's an issue, I just don't think that anything at a department level, either that was written before or is written now, should contradict the University-wide policy. There may be interpretations. The one thing we are all guaranteed which we pride and value is academic judgment, and academic judgment of a faculty member, a department chair, and a Dean may all be the same, and that's the best situation. When an academic judgment differs, I think there needs to be a good rationale for it, but I also recognize that it could differ at any one of those levels."

Phyllis Dallas (CLASS) noted that Krug was not asking about new faculty coming in but about a faculty member who is going up for tenure now, who wants to know if the criteria that that person was brought in on still apply or if new guidelines that have been instituted in the last year or two can be applied to this person, and this was a question that was asked last year and she had understood President Grube to be saying that it was certainly his intent that faculty not be held to new standards that they did not have an adequate amount of time to meet, and since that was clear we did not need a grandfather clause; that for the system to be fair, whatever standards faculty came in under would apply for the first personnel action, and only after that could they be held to new standards from the department, new understandings from the University.

Provost Vandegrift stated that he wanted to reemphasize that there are no new standards; he stated that what the Senate voted upon and accepted was a clarification only. So, he stated, whether they are coming up for tenure now or just starting at Georgia Southern, faculty are subject to evaluations based on how they have met expectations placed on them by criteria that have not changed.

David Robinson (CLASS) expressed concern that Deans were now, with interpretive leeway, given cover to align themselves with higher administration policy and thereby treat departmental requirements as moot, and that this had not been the Senate's intent; the Senate's concern had been to protect faculty and departmental prerogatives. Provost Vandegrift replied that there is no higher policy than that endorsed by the Faculty Senate and there is no intention to force anything else on the faculty. President Grube added that Deans can arrive at different academic judgments than departments, and that perfect and perpetual congruence of opinions at all levels of a university is something that has never existed; there is no intent or attempt to give cover to improper administrative actions.

Dallas noted that she had heard from faculty who were going up for tenure this fall that there were many questions, and hence the process is not as transparent as the Senate and as Provost Vandegrift and President Grube have hoped it would be. One faculty member got no guidelines from her Chair about the new procedures for tenure; another was not sure about the timetable and had problems getting that type

of information. It becomes a morale issue when faculty feel as though they are not being given all of the information they can be given about this process and that people are not interested in clarifying the process for them.

Provost Vandegrift agreed and noted that the Provost's web page (<http://www2.gasou.edu/acadaff/forms/promotion/promoteninfo.html>) has all of the dates and instructions for the processes and all of the forms. He will talk to the Deans about being sure that Department Chairs communicate this. David Dudley (CLASS) stated his sense that regarding tenure and promotion and making the process transparent and fair, the Senate, faculty as a whole, and the administration are all on the same side. Cyr noted that the Senate has a sub-committee on Faculty Governance working on such issues, and stated that we need to make sure departments have written policies and these policies do not conflict with any college or University or Regents' policies, and make sure that everybody knows these policies.