

Report to University Council, September 29, 2021
University Council Executive Committee

The University Council Executive Committee met on September 15, 2021, via Zoom Webinar, for its first meeting of the 2021-2022 academic year. As the first order of business, the committee approved the minutes of the April 7, 2021, meeting. The committee then unanimously elected Professor Janet Westpheling to serve a three-year term on the University System of Georgia Faculty Council. The chair also called (and is calling) for nominations from University Council to serve on the UGA Retirees Association; please email me to nominate or self-nominate.

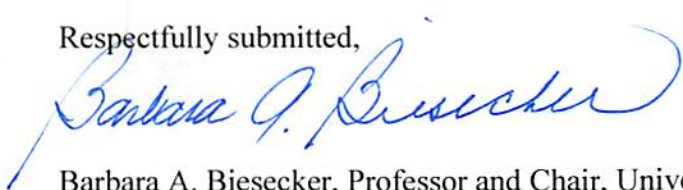
Following the approval of 14 proposals from the University Curriculum Committee you will be considering this afternoon, the EC entertained the three proposals put before you today from the Committee on Statutes, Bylaws, and Committees. The EC next considered two proposals put forth by the Faculty Affairs Committee: revisions to the Lecturer Appointment and Promotion Guidelines as well as a resolution regarding covid-19 mitigation at UGA that you will consider today.

The EC then discussed a proposal from the Franklin College Faculty Senate seeking UC endorsement of its resolution related to COVID-19 mitigation. The proposed resolution was sent back to the Franklin Faculty Senate (6 members voting to move it forward, 16 voting to send it back to committee). We next entertained the Committee on Facilities' request to have its Covid-19 resolution put on the UC agenda. That proposal was approved (23 in favor, 1 against) and will be put before you today.

The Chair of the Executive Committee Subcommittee on Baldwin Hall reported to the EC on the administration's response to recommendations and resolutions forwarded last academic year. The Baldwin Hall Subcommittee's report, recommendations, and resolutions as well as the President's response to them are available for review on the UC website under today's agenda.

Finally, during the September 15 meeting I discussed with the EC the agenda and documents from the September 9, 2021 Board of Regents meeting, which included proposed changes to post-tenure and annual review, including but not limited to the introduction of new criterion for the evaluation of faculty: "student success activities"; the tethering of annual evaluation to the tenure review process; a new policy regarding remediation; and a new policy regarding post-tenure dismissal. Four resolutions addressing those proposed changes were sent to and voted upon electronically by the EC. The four resolutions, which are being considered in tandem by the Executive Committees and Faculty Senates at Georgia Tech and Georgia State, passed with overwhelming support and were sent on September 28, 2021 to the Acting Chancellor and the Board of Regents. President Morehead and Provost Hu were cc'd on that transmissal.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara A. Biesecker, Professor and Chair, University Council Executive Committee
Enclosures: Resolutions

Demand for Board of Regents to Permit Necessary Discourse and Study of its Proposed Changes to (1) Procedures for Dismissal of Faculty Members, (2) Institutions' Authority to Grant Tenure, and (3) Post Tenure Review and Annual Review Standards and Process

WHEREAS at the September 9, 2021, meeting, the Board of Regents proposed new policies for adoption during the October 12-13, 2021, meeting that substantially alter (1) the procedures for the discipline and dismissal of faculty members (8.3.9), (2) the authority of institutions to grant tenure (8.3.7.1), and (3) the standards and process for post tenure review and annual evaluations (8.3.5.1, 8.3.5.4, 8.3.6, 8.3.6.1, 8.3.7.1, and 8.3.7.3);

WHEREAS these proposed changes to the Board of Regents Policy Manual dramatically impact faculty conditions of employment;

WHEREAS these proposed changes have not been widely circulated to impacted faculty, and impacted faculty have not been given adequate opportunity to comment upon these proposed changes;

WHEREAS the USG faculty council, whose mission is to “to promote and foster the welfare of system faculty through the combined creativity and expertise of faculty representatives from system institutions” is not scheduled to meet until after the October 12-13, 2021, Board of Regents meeting;

WHEREAS the USG faculty council must have an opportunity, on behalf of the system institutions' faculty, to consider and comment upon the proposed changes; and now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty demand that the Board of Regents table further action on these proposed changes so that impacted faculty and the USG faculty council may consider and comment upon these proposals.

Faculty Objection to Changes to Institutions' Authority to Grant Tenure

WHEREAS the Board of Regents' agenda dated September 9, 2021, proposed the adoption of new language for Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.7.1 at the next Board of Regents' meeting on October 12-13, 2021;

WHEREAS the proposed language for Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.7.1 would alter an institution's authority to grant tenure, and specifically states, "While the Board of Regents has delegated authority for tenure decisions to institution presidents, if an institution is adjudged to be insufficiently rigorous in its enactment of faculty review processes the Board of Regents may move the authority to award tenure to the Board level until institutional processes have been remediated.";

WHEREAS the proposed language inappropriately interferes with an institution's, its president's, and its faculty's ability and expertise to evaluate and promote their faculty;

WHEREAS removal of an institution's authority, through its President, to grant tenure creates the potential for the appearance of political interference at USG institutions, which would endanger institutional accreditation; and now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty strenuously object to the proposed language in 8.3.7.1 and any removal of an institution's authority to grant tenure.

Faculty Objection to Changes to Procedures for Dismissal and Removal of Faculty Members

WHEREAS the Board of Regents' agenda dated September 9, 2021, proposed the adoption of new language for Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.9 at the next Board of Regents' meeting on October 12-13, 2021;

WHEREAS the proposed language for Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.9 would alter the procedures for the dismissal and removal of faculty members, and specifically states "Such removals for cause shall be governed by the following policies on Grounds for Removal and Procedures for Dismissal. A faculty member may also be separated from employment prior to the end of the contract term other than for cause as outlined here, pursuant to other policies of the Board of Regents. Such other policies shall not be governed by or subject to the following policies on Grounds for Removal and Procedures for Dismissal";

WHEREAS said language dramatically departs from prior standards and process governing employment within the USG system, including existing provisions in Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.9.2;

WHEREAS said language removes longstanding procedural processes for dismissing faculty and thereby imperils the stability of USG institutions' faculty workforce; and now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty strenuously object to the proposed language for 8.3.9 because it empowers separation from employment within a contract period without process and procedures as required by 8.3.9.2

Faculty Objection to Changes to Post Tenure Review and Annual Review Standards and Process

WHEREAS the Board of Regents' agenda dated September 9, 2021, proposed the adoption of new language for Board of Regents Policy Manual 8.3.5.1, 8.3.5.4, 8.3.6, 8.3.6.1, 8.3.7.1, and 8.3.7.3 at the next Board of Regents' meeting on October 12-13, 2021;

WHEREAS the University System of Georgia (USG) created a taskforce to review post tenure review policies, and the composition of the taskforce did not reflect or represent the diversity of institutions within the system, which vary in size, emphasis on undergraduate instruction, inclusion of graduate instruction, and research mission;

WHEREAS the proposed changes to 8.3.5.1, 8.3.5.4, 8.3.6, 8.3.6.1, 8.3.7.1, and 8.3.7.3 do not suit all institutions within the system equally, as they proscribe a single approach for the faculty of institutions that vary in size, instructional mission, and research activities;

WHEREAS system-wide standards for post tenure review and annual reviews must allow each institution the ability to tailor a process that honors its own unique mission and strategic priorities;

WHEREAS system-wide standards for post tenure review and annual reviews must allow each institution to develop timelines for corrective action that are appropriate for the institution and its faculty;

WHEREAS the purpose of post tenure review is to be a constructive and developmental process that facilitates faculty improvement;

WHEREAS a negative and punitive review process can poison the relationship between faculty and administration and create a demoralizing climate for faculty;

WHEREAS annual and post tenure reviews must respect faculty members' academic freedom to make instructional choices and foster freedom of inquiry to its fullest extent;

WHEREAS the proposed changes adopt a new category of faculty evaluation, student success activities, that is a departure from longstanding three-pronged approach to faculty evaluation of instruction, research, and service;

WHEREAS the inclusion of a new evaluation category of student success measures needs significant study prior to adoption; such study must include interrogation the appropriateness for inclusion as a measure of evaluation for individual faculty members as well as any best practices for inclusion, if appropriate;

WHEREAS impacted faculty have not had adequate opportunity to comment on the taskforce report nor the proposed changes, which replace the entirety of 8.3.5.4; and now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty object to the proposed language of 8.3.5.1, 8.3.5.4, 8.3.6, 8.3.6.1, 8.3.7.1, and 8.3.7.3 as written because the proposed language impedes academic freedom of inquiry, does not adequately consider the institution's instructional and research missions, and does not foster a constructive and developmental review process; and

BE IT RESOLVED the faculty request additional study and comment be collected on post tenure review and annual review standards and process, prior to the adoption of any new language.