

February 5, 2024

At a February 1, 2024 meeting of the Faculty Senate of the Mary Frances Early College of Education, a request was made to withdraw a statement (attached) presented by Dr. Laura Bierema at the University Council's Executive Committee meeting on January 31, 2024 which claims to but does not represent the views of all faculty in the college and revise it to include the signatures of those faculty in the college who do support the document.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth A. St. Pierre".

Elizabeth A. St.Pierre, PhD
Professor and Chair, Executive Committee
UGA University Council



31 January 2024

Statement to University Council Regarding Proposed Promotion and Tenure Guidelines

Laura Bierema, Professor

Mary Frances Early College of Education Representative

Today I am representing concerns about the proposed revisions to the “Guidelines for Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Academic Rank Faculty” on behalf of Career Track (Non-Tenure) and Tenure Track Faculty in the Mary Frances Early College of Education (MFECOE). The issues concern definitions and proposed language about which faculty are eligible to supervise and manage promotion and tenure procedures. The proposed new definitions and language specify only tenured faculty should be responsible for administering promotion and tenure processes.

The MFECOE has current and previous Career Track Faculty Department Heads who have an established record of outstanding department management and leadership, including the administration of P&T. There are at least four issues we wish to raise about the proposed changes to the guidelines including the proposal:

1. Creates inequity;
2. Circumvents faculty governance as our faculty have voted on their preference for department heads, in compliance with current guidelines;
3. Skirts existing procedures for facilitating faculty voting such as hiring, P&T, and others; and
4. Poses an undue burden on deans and department heads who should have the authority to determine structures of management and leadership within their units, specifically the appointment of unit heads, rather than these appointments be dictated by P & T Guidelines.

Essentially most of the proposal language prohibits Career Track Faculty from administering P&T processes. I am representing objections to the proposed language as follows in Table 1.

Table 1

MFECOE Objections to Proposed Language and procedures for the UGA “Guidelines for Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Academic Rank Faculty”

Issue	Page	Section	Opposed Language (note the Faculty Affairs Committee’s proposed language changes to the Guidelines are in <i>red</i> , existing Guidelines language is in <i>black</i>)
1.	4	Glossary: Appointment Unit Head:	<i>“Only tenured faculty members of appropriate rank can implement and supervise policies and procedures for the appointment of tenure track faculty described in these guidelines.”</i> (Note: Objectionable language is “implement and supervise”).
2.	4	Glossary: Eligible Voting Faculty	<i>“Only tenure track faculty specified below may conduct or vote on the appointment, third year review, preliminary consideration, promotion, tenure, and post tenure review of tenure track faculty.”</i> (Note: Objectionable language is “conduct”).
3.	6	Glossary: Promotion and Tenure Unit Head (PTU Head):	<i>“...a tenured faculty member appointed or elected as outlined by the school or college guidelines. Only tenured faculty members of appropriate rank can implement and supervise policies and procedures for promotion and tenure of tenure track faculty described in these Guidelines.”</i> (Note: This language conflicts with p. 4 where it says the unit’s faculty must elect a PTU head, which then must be approved by the dean and provost).
4.	19	VII. Procedures for Promotion of Tenure-Track Faculty, B. Preparing for Promotion and/or Tenure Unit Evaluation	<i>“...a dossier must be prepared for evaluation by the eligible voting faculty in the PTU.”</i> (Note: This language also conflicts with the reality that Staff play an important role in preparing dossiers—are they qualified to do this work if, according to the proposal, non-tenure-track faculty are not?).
5.	23	C.2. School/College Level Review	<i>“The school/college will establish written procedures for the selection of the PTU head, who should be either a tenured associate professor or professor, as appropriate, elected by the tenured faculty in the school/college or appointed through faculty approved school/college guidelines and approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.”</i>

I will briefly outline the concerns with the proposed new glossary terms and language on the proposed P&T Guidelines:

1. **What problem is this language identifying who can supervise P&T processes trying to solve?**
 - a. What is the evidence that non-tenure track faculty have not been effective in handling a range of personnel matters such as appointment, third-year review, and post-tenure review?
 - b. We recognize legitimate concerns about threats to tenure exist, but those threats are not coming from within the university or from non-tenure track faculty.
 - c. The proposed language creates inequity and adds to many long-standing inequities for non-tenure track faculty.
2. **Most, if not all, of the processes for tenure track personnel are governed by a faculty vote process that is well-documented in the current policy.**
 - a. Tenure track faculty vote on hiring tenure-track faculty, tenure track faculty vote on third-year review, a committee of tenured faculty members votes on post-tenure review.
 - b. Most of these processes also involve considerable administrative oversight by the dean and, in some cases, the provost (e.g., approving composition of search committees, signing off on professional development plans, approval of offer letters).
 - c. In many departments, annual review processes are conducted by a committee of peers and then finalized by the department head.
 - d. Regardless of the track, rank, or budgeted time of a department head, many department heads will be evaluating work with which they are not familiar in disciplines with which they are not familiar given the varied and complex nature of faculty workload and department compositions.
 - e. How is a career track department head using a peer-developed rubric to evaluate a tenure-track faculty member's research productivity any different than a tenure track department head using a different part of that same rubric to evaluate clinical work in which the department head has never personally engaged? Given the level of peer input and administrative oversight into these processes, why is a department head, regardless of rank or track, not competent to handle the overall process? For example, e-personnel processes require leadership and management experience, and that people in all tracks can have those qualities.
3. **Existing policies are already in place with respect to having an alternate PTU head if the department head is not of the appropriate track or rank.**
 - a. Why do we need additional restrictions on the process?
 - b. Why can't we trust departments to enact these policies in ways that make sense for their unit while complying with all expectations?
 - c. Some of these specific details in the proposal could impede the work of the department, for instance, interaction with staff members who are involved in the promotion process.
4. **The colleges and university already face a leadership pipeline issue.**
 - a. Why make it worse by devaluing the work of non-tenure track faculty?

- b. The university has selected career-track faculty for leadership programs and high-level administrative roles, so these changes in guidelines seem to be sending mixed messages.
5. **The spirit of the proposal suggests the involvement of non-tenure-track faculty “erodes tenure,” which is inconsistent with AAUP’s Statement on “Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession”** which points out that all faculty appointments should be engaged in decision making and teaching is tenurable work (<https://www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession>):
 - a. “To support the essential mission of higher education, faculty appointments, including contingent appointments, should incorporate all aspects of university life: active engagement with an academic discipline, teaching or mentoring of undergraduate or graduate students, **participation in academic decision making**, and service on campus and to the surrounding community.”
 - b. “ The professor in a research university, whose appointment includes a significant responsibility for original research, should not be the sole or primary model for tenurable academic work. A faculty member whose position focuses primarily on teaching, supported by sufficient opportunity for scholarship and service, is also engaged in tenurable academic work.”

The MFECOE Faculty recommend that the proposed “Guidelines” be referred back to the Faculty Affairs Committee for consideration of and action on the issues raised in this statement. We propose all language regarding faculty rank of the oversight, supervision, management, or conduct of promotion and tenure procedures be struck from the proposed “Guidelines for Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Academic Rank Faculty” to allow administrative flexibility and make the guidelines more equitable.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the concerns on behalf of the MFE COE. Rather than creating guidelines that exacerbate inequities within our own institution and stymie existing processes that are working effectively, we advocate banding together to ensure that, collectively, the faculty of this university are leveraging varied talents to meet the university’s mission in ways that promote collegiality and trust.

Respectfully Submitted,

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