

Minutes of the Faculty Affairs Committee of the UGA University Council Meeting
September 24, 2021

Members in Attendance:

Chair: Janette Hill
Kent Barnett
Wayde Brown
Shira Chess
Timothy Grey
Lindsey Harding
Janette Hill
Mark Huber
Artur Muszynski
David Okech
Andrew Park
Annette Poulsen
Amber Prentiss
Esra Santesso
Yoo-Kyoung Seock

Amanda Smith
Elizabeth St. Pierre
Thiab Taha
Richard Vining
C. Brock Woodson
Y. George Zheng

Guests:

Professor Jack Hu, Provost
Professor Elizabeth Weeks, Associate
Provost for Faculty Affairs
Professor Barb Biesecker, Executive
Committee Chair of University Council

The meeting was started at 10:02.

The meeting began with a discussion of recent proposed policy changes of the Board of Regents regarding evaluation, promotion, tenure and dismissal of faculty members. Provost Hu and Associate Provost Weeks provided insights into their discussion with other provosts in USG and with members of the Board of Regents. Provost Hu remarks on the development of the proposals and also some of the main areas of concern were as follows:

- When the provosts met with BOR representatives in the summer, the primary focus was on the incorporation of student success metrics as a separate category of faculty review. However, the provosts noted that student success results from more than individual faculty input, but rather all facets of the University. They also noted that all current employment contracts would have to be revised for these considerations. Similarly, all promotion and tenure policies would need to be revised.
- In response to this discussion, the BOR modified their language to “student activities” rather than “student success.” The individual institutions have discussed how they would incorporate these areas into existing policies. Provost Hu indicated that UGA has considered incorporating as part of the evaluation of teaching, while Georgia Tech would recommend incorporating more broadly into all three categories of review of teaching, research, and service.
- The proposed language in section 8.3.9 regarding faculty removal where the BOR indicated faculty could be removed “not for cause” was first made public in September. Evidently, this language was supposed to be connected to the post-tenure review

process. Provost Hu shared revised language that has been suggested by BOR that would clarify this distinction. Provost Hu strongly stated his position that faculty dismissal should be guided by faculty governance.

- Provost Hu summarized the three many areas of concern as being tied to 1) incorporation of “student activities” into review of faculty, 2) dismissal “not for cause” being tied to post-tenure review (which we allow determination of “cause”) and 3) maintaining institution flexibility in these matters since there are significant differences with respect to expectations, responsibilities and outcomes for the 26 member institutions.

Associate Provost Weeks and Executive Committee Chair Biesecker provided additional insights into the discussion. They are continuing to review the various BOR proposals to make sure that all implications and ramifications to faculty governance, promotion and tenure, and dismissal are fully recognized.

After the opportunity for questions and discussion by members of the FAC, Provost Hu left the meeting.

The FAC then discussed and voted on four resolutions to send to the Board of Regents regarding the proposals (quorum confirmed):

Resolution 1: 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.

Motion to vote by Esra Santesso, seconded by Shira Chess.

Vote by Qualtrics poll:

19 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Resolution 2: Faculty Objection to Changes to Institutions Authority to Grant Tenure.

Motion to vote by Bettie St. Pierre, seconded by Amanda Smith.

Vote by Qualtrics poll:

19 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Resolution 3: Faculty Objection to Changes to Procedures for Dismissal and Removal of Faculty Members.

Motion to vote by Bettie St. Pierre, seconded by Andrew Park.

Vote by Qualtrics poll:

17 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention

Resolution 4: Faculty Objection to Changes to Post Tenure Review and Annual Review Standards and Process.

Motion to vote by ???, seconded by ???. (note: not able to confirm who moved and seconded by name)

Vote by Qualtrics poll:

19 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain

Chair Hill then turned to the remaining items on the agenda, including the approval of the minutes from April 2021 and August 2021 (motion to vote by Bettie St. Pierre and seconded by ???). (note: not able to confirm who seconded by name) Unanimous approval without discussion.

Chair Hill also shared that the FAC's resolution on COVID response and the Lecturer Guidelines were approved by the Executive Committee for inclusion on the University Council agenda for vote by the full Council.

David Okech moved to adjourn the meeting (seconded by Esra Santesso) at 10:55 and the meeting was adjourned.

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.