Report of the Equity, Fairness, and Inclusion Working Group

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Our Charge

“This working group will identify potential biases that exist in the annual review and promotion processes which might impact a faculty member’s abilities to thrive and advance. This working group will make recommendations about how to ensure these processes are equitable and fair, and how achievements can be considered relative to opportunity. This working group is invited to consider the evidence used in these processes such as teaching evaluations, citation metrics, and grant-making, all of which have been shown to be impacted by race and gender. This group will also consider how invisible labor and contributions related to UTK’s strategic plan such as diversity, inclusion, and collaboration can be better incorporated into these processes.”
Our Working Group Members

Libby Barker – Engineering
Mike Galbreth – Business
Martin Griffin – English
Andy Kramer – Anthropology
Mitsu Misawa – Education
Bonnie Ownley – Agriculture
Amber Roesnner – Communication
Matthew Theriot – Social Work
Steven Waller – Education
Lisa Yamagata-Lynch – Education and Ombudsperson
Our Process

- Met every other week;

- Began by inviting members to share the results of related work they had done on other campus committees;

- Next invited members to share their own and known experiences with issues that fell within the charge of the working group;

- Throughout, kept a running list of “problems” and “proposed solutions”;

- Finally, began to synthesize the results of our fact-finding, organizing things by broad topic (e.g., evaluation, service, perquisites, etc.)
Our Overall Conclusions

There is a lot to be done—more than can be adequately addressed at this point.

Five specific areas of concern that are especially problematic for faculty from underrepresented groups:

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Ambiguous Benchmarks
Departments should be encouraged to create clear but not rigid standards for retention, tenure, and promotion at all ranks.

The outcome of retention votes (retain versus not retain) should be shared with Assistant Professors, but the exact vote count should not be shared for those being retained.

A clear case should be made for casting a “no” vote for retention, tenure, or promotion and a discussion of such a case must be included in the department tenure or retention letter. “No” votes should be discarded if there is no clear explanation for a vote against retention, tenure, or promotion in the department tenure or retention letter.

Department standards should specify the body of work necessary for a faculty member to be eligible for promotion to Associate Professor and Professor.
Failure to Follow Procedures
Failure to Follow Procedures

- The Provost’s Office should create a **best practices** document on retention, promotion, and tenure for units to follow.

- The Provost’s Office should allow faculty to ask for a **procedural audit** if they are denied retention, tenure, and promotion. Procedural audits are designed only to ensure that university policy was followed correctly in the retention, tenure, and promotion process. Audits will be conducted by a committee designated by the College or University.

- Each College should convene a committee to **audit all Department bylaws** with regard to retention, tenure, and promotion in order to ensure that all Department bylaws are in conformity with university policy. (This committee may also be able to identify Departments that need to clarify their tenure, promotion, and retention standards.)
Starting today, the job requires a Ph.D.
Feel free to apply for your own job.

Whew! Luckily, I have a Ph.D.

You do?
Well, the job also requires an Olympic gold medal.


And a post-humous congressional medal of honor.

Moving Goalposts
Moving Goalposts

- Entering Assistant Professors should be evaluated based on the tenure requirements in place at the time of hire unless the faculty member opts to be evaluated based on the tenure standards in place at the time of evaluation.
Gatekeeping Culture
Gatekeeping Culture

- If a faculty member receives a majority vote to not retain, tenure, or promote a faculty member, the unit Head shall provide an explanation to their College that assumes the failure to retain, tenure, or promote a faculty member is a failure of the Department. Where did the process break down? Did they hire badly, and, if so, why? Was mentoring insufficient or poorly done? Was start-up insufficient? Did the annual review process clearly communicate current and potential problems? Were expectations not clearly communicated?

- Faculty shall not be all allowed to abstain from tenure, promotion, or retention votes unless faculty are on leave or if there is a clear conflict of interest.
Inadequate Mentoring

Comic:

1. "I'm sorry I've been too busy to mentor you lately.
2. Were you mentoring me before?
3. Kind of, I was criticizing you in my mind. I think it made me a better person."
Inadequate Mentoring

- The Provost's Office or Colleges should provide faculty training in how to mentor junior faculty;
- The Provost’s Office should provide training for Department Heads on best practices for selecting mentors and how to spot problems;
- College Deans should encourage Department Heads to recognize and reward good mentoring.
Questions?