

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to explore the argument in favor of revising the policy and criteria guiding judgments on promotion as one mechanism through which we can improve faculty participation in governance particularly in university wide and Faculty Senate committees and the Senate itself. Below is an analysis of our predicament and a proposal to address the problem. I also attach a motion for the Senate to consider.

I. The Problem

The problem we face is the decline of robust and vigorous faculty involvement in shared governance at the University level. We have serious problems in getting enough faculty to fill committee seats on Senate committees, let alone have competitive elections for those seats. More urgent is the paucity of willing faculty to chair committees.

An associated problem is getting faculty to chair departments as well.

The ideal is vigorous competition for all of these seats, and in particular seats on the Faculty Senate and officers of the Senate. These positions ought to be prizes in the eyes of faculty and the Administration.

Why do we have this problem? Like many problems, this one has multiple sources. Two come to mind. First, many faculty, particularly younger faculty, are unfamiliar with the idea of shared governance and its importance for maintaining and expanding a free and democratic university. Few organizations offer the potentially liberating character of universities which theoretically boast the unfettered market place of ideas and individualistic and collective freedoms of control of the workplace.

This however is made manifest only if faculty participate energetically in the mechanisms that have been created and can be further developed that allow for substantive involvement in the decision making of the University. If more faculty believed that this was important, not only for the university but for their own character as free human beings, then they would make the time for such involvement.

This is a problem of consciousness and philosophy and as such requires more discussion and education in the future. It is the most difficult to address through Faculty Senate and Administrative action.

A second problem that has led to our predicament is the lack of incentives for shared governance participation. This deficiency takes various forms including the absence of financial incentives, time incentives and built-in promotion incentives. In essence, serving on University wide committees and Faculty Senate Committees carries burdens but few material rewards. This problem however is one that Faculty Senate and Administrative action can address.

II. One Solution

One way to address this problem is to change our policy on promotions, both in principle and in specific language in the Faculty Handbook that guides judgments in promotion.

As has been discussed, one proposal is to change the criteria for promotion that would elevate the importance of service on University and Faculty Senate Committees. For example, presently, the criteria for promotion to associate and full professor ranks has emphasized “excellence” in all three areas of faculty activity, teaching, scholarship and service. My proposal is to change the policy such that excellence would be required in teaching and only one of the two other areas of faculty work, scholarship and service. To be sure, a faculty member would still have to show evidence of substantive work in all three but show evidence of “excellence” in only two areas of work.

This would allow faculty to chart a course of activity for a series of years that would emphasize either scholarship or Faculty Senate Committee or University level service, with the confidence that demonstrated evidence in one or the other will carry the reward of promotion to associate and full professor ranks. This change in policy would signal to the faculty expanded pathways for career development and enhance the prospect of healthy shared governance.

To avoid the possibility that this new policy would undermine service, a correlate policy change would include elevating the minimum service requirement on these committees. Specifically, the new requirement for promotion would include active service on Senate and University committees and chairing those same committees. By including explicit language in the Handbook that spells out these new thresholds, we can make it clear that service is a necessary condition for promotion to the ranks of associate and full professor.

In other words, two elements of policy require change:
 (1) excellence is required in teaching and either scholarship or service; and
 (2) the minimum level of activity in the service area needs elevated and redirected towards University and Faculty Senate Committee activity.

III. Specific Language Changes in the Text of the Faculty Handbook.

Towards this end, I propose the following changes in the relevant passages of The Faculty Handbook pages 10 and 11, Sections B. *Criteria and Procedures for Promotion and Tenure* and C. *Faculty Ranks*. All additions are in bold; subtractions of text are present but cross out. See attachment.

Motion:

The Faculty Senate endorses policy changes in the promotions criteria that will embrace two principles (1) excellence is required in teaching and in either scholarship or service, hence two of the three categories of faculty activities for promotion to associate and full professor and (2) the minimum level of activity in the service area must be elevated and redirected towards University and Faculty Senate Committee activity.

In the accompanying supporting document, “Proposed Changes in The Faculty Handbook,” specific language changes in the Handbook reflect these recommendations.