

2017-18 Professional Standards Committee (PSC) Report

Submitted to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee & Office of the Provost 4/18/18

Members

Carolyn Bonifield (Grossman School of Business)
Sid Bosworth (UVM Extension)
Catherine (CC) Christenson (Larner College of Medicine)
Bernard (Chip) Cole (College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences)
Michael F. Giangreco, Chair (College of Education and Social Services)
Eric Lindstrom (College of Arts & Sciences)
Hendrika (Rycki) Maltby (College of Nursing and Health Sciences)
William (Bill) Mierse (College of Arts & Sciences)
Keith Mintz (Larner College of Medicine)
Donna O'Malley (UVM Libraries)
Chris Koliba (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences)
Curt Ventris (Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources)

In Memoriam

Our dear colleague, and long time PSC member, Bob Parsons (representing the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences), stuck with his duties as a vital member of the PSC as long as he possibly could -- through August 2017 -- that's when he informed us that he would not be able to continue. Bob died on February 16, 2018. He will be missed all of us who had the pleasure and honor to work with him.

Summary of Primary Activities

Sabbatical Reviews

During the Fall Semester the PSC reviewed a total of 57 sabbatical applications.

Number of Sabbatical Applications Reviewed:

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), n=5
College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), n=42
College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences (CEMS), n=4
College of Education & Social Services (CESS), n=2
College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS), n=2
Grossman School of Business (GSB), n=1
Larner College of Medicine (LCOM), n=0
Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources (RSENR), n=0
UVM Extension (EXT), n=0
UVM Libraries (LIB), n=1
Total Sabbaticals Reviewed, N=57

Reappointment, Tenure & Promotion Reviews (RPT)

During the 2017-2018 academic term the PSC reviewed 103 RPT dossiers and submitted its votes and comments to the Office of the Provost.

College/ School & N of Dossiers	2nd Reappoint- ment @ Assistant Professor	Promotion Senior Lecturer or *Promotion Assistant Professor (from Research Associate)	Promotion Associate Professor Non- Tenure Track (e.g., Research, Clinical, Libraries, Extension)	Promotion Associate Professor & Tenure (*includes tenure only at rank)	Promotion Full Professor Non- Tenure Track (e.g., Research, Clinical)	Promotion Full Professor Tenure Track (includes tenure only at rank)
CALS n=11	2	0	2	5	0	2
CAS n= 29	4	8	0	7	10	0
CESS n=5	2	1*	0	1	0	1
CEMS n=7	2	2	0	2	0	1
CNHS n=6	1	0	3	1*	0	1
GSB n=4	0	0	0	4*	0	0
LCOM n=36	2	0	17	3	9	3
RSENR n=5	0	0	1	0	0	4
LIB n=2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Totals N=103	13	11	25	23	19	12

PSC Collaboration with the Larner College of Medicine (LCOM)

Led by the efforts of Dr. Charlie Irvin, the LCOM has revised its reappointment and promotion process and corresponding forms for faculty on non-tenure pathways (i.e., Clinical, Research, Education). PSC input was solicited in the development of the revised process and forms. Dr. Irvin has been in regular communication with the PSC via email and phone, and visited the committee in person in March 2018 to review changes. LCOM has requested ongoing feedback on the changes they have enacted; the PSC has provided written feedback directly to LCOM in mid April 2018.

Review of PSC Operating Procedures

In April 2018 the PSC engaged in its annual review of its operating procedures and agreed to some minor changes. The revised version was submitted to the Faculty Senate office for reposting on the PSC web page.

Summary of Persistent Issues Related to the Sabbatical and RPT Submissions

Given its role reviewing sabbatical and RPT dossiers from across the university, the PSC is in a unique position to notice patterns, trends, and issues that may be helpful for faculty, Chairs, Deans, and the Provost to consider for future submissions. In this section of our report, we offer a series of issues that we think would be helpful to address.

Sabbatical Issues

1. We note substantial variability among sabbatical submissions, especially pertaining to the level of specificity with which actual activities to be completed during the sabbatical are described. We continue to review sabbatical applications that include a strong rationale, but sometimes lack the level of specificity that would allow the reader to clearly understand what the faculty will actually be doing during the sabbatical period. We encourage such specificity of activities with projected timelines.
2. If the sabbatical application includes collaboration with partner institutions or organizations, including letters of invitation indicating access and anticipated collaboration verifies that the proposed activities can be pursued and hopefully completed. Some sabbaticals continue include plans for such collaboration without verifying letters or emails.
3. We encourage sabbatical applicants to be as explicit as possible about how the sabbatical plan extends beyond what they might typically be expected to complete on their standard workload FTE devoted to scholarship and/or creative activity. For example, if someone indicates they plan to complete an article they have been working on and write one additional paper, one might reasonably wonder why these activities necessitate a sabbatical. It is most helpful when applicants explain how the sabbatical time allows them a unique opportunity to engage in activities that would otherwise not be available to them given a typical slate of duties (e.g., teaching, advising, committee work).

4. Due to the nature of funding cycles and notification dates, some faculty members who are pursuing external funding for sabbatical related activities (e.g., foreign or domestic travel) do not know the status of potential funding before submitting the sabbatical application. Since the plan may be dependent on the funding, faculty members often include a Plan A (a grand plan based on receipt of desired funding) and a Plan B (a scaled-back or completely different plan if funding is not forthcoming). This poses a challenge in the review process because the sabbatical applications almost universally are built around Plan A, with Plan B often offered as a brief afterthought (e.g., "I have an extensive plan to travel overseas to do X, Y, Z, and if I don't get funded I plan to stay home and write a couple of articles."). We suggest that the Plans be A and B be reversed. By this we mean that the sabbatical applications primary Plan A should be what the faculty member can commit to at the time of submission and the Plan B be considered value-added (e.g., ... and if I receive the funding for which I applied or am applying I will be able to do these additional or different activities...). If presented this way the proposal can be evaluated on the known rather than the unknown.
5. Letters from Department Chairs would be enhanced if more of them explicitly explained how the proposed sabbatical supports the work of the department and/or program.

RPT Issues

We have separated this section into two categories, issues and suggestions for: (a) Department Chairs, Deans, and Faculty Standards Committees, and (b) faculty members submitting RPT dossiers.

For Chairs, Dean & FSC:

1. The PSC recognizes that scholarship standards and expectations vary substantially across disciplines. While we rely on the cross-disciplinary membership of the PSC to review applications and help us understand expectations in different fields, at times we would be most appreciative if Chairs and Deans would help us understand expectations related to individual cases. One area where this comes up pertains to the standards/expectations for being an independent or lead researcher or author and the extent to which this is expected. For example, sometimes a faculty bidding for associate professor with tenure may have several collaborative authorships, with few if any as the lead author. In many disciplines, there is an expectation that being the lead author/researcher is expected to demonstrate independence from doctoral or post-doctoral mentors and establish the faculty member's capability to conduct research and lead scholarship. We understand that in some circumstances a faculty member may not often be the lead, yet still deserve promotion. For example, someone whose specialty contribution is methodological may be the lead author less frequently, although the contributions may be significant and essential. In cases where the scholarship record warrants, we ask Chairs and Deans to educate us, through their letters, about this aspect of scholarship expectation pertaining to candidates.
2. On a related issue, PSC is always appreciative of having Chairs clarify scholarship standards within specific fields. For example, in some fields publishing a book is an expectation and sometimes it matters whether it is a trade or academic/university press. In other fields the peer-reviewed journal article is the important standard. We recently were

informed that in some fields where research is progressing very quickly (e.g., technology, computer science) sometimes a published proceeding based on presenting at high impact meetings may be as important as a journal article -- we need such value highlighted in Chair and Dean letters as appropriate. Other less common forms of scholarship, such as translations or writing a government report may have high value -- again we need Chairs and Deans to explain the value, especially in cases that may include less traditional outputs that are familiar to PS reviewers.

3. Some dossiers still do not sufficiently or accurately specify an individual's actual workload percentages and/or information about what that means. Some Chair workload sections provide: (a) explicit workload clarity (those are very helpful), (b) boilerplate language (e.g., 40:40:20) even though the applicant may provide some level of contradictory information in their own narrative, and (c) no interpretable information about workload. How many courses (and different courses) a faculty member teaches or how much time they spend administratively are examples of factors that impact scholarship/research productivity. This type of workload information is helpful to put scholarship outputs in perspective. If two faculty members in the same or similar fields are teaching five, four, or two classes per year is relevant to evaluating their scholarship output. We suggest that while percentages, which are commonly relied upon, can be used it is equally important to be specific about what percentages actually entail. This need exists because percentages tend to be gross indications of workload effort and we find standard designations (e.g., 40:40:20) are not reliable indicators of how many courses a person is teaching (we have encountered ranges from 2 to 5 with the same workload percentage listed).
4. If "No" votes at the Department and/or FSC level are sent forward without explanation, the PSC has little choice but to discount them. We encourage "No" votes to be accompanied by explicitly naming the category and specific standard(s) that the "No" voter believes have not been satisfactorily met.
5. When hiring faculty who have served at other universities it should be explicit how much, if any, of their previous experience is counting toward this promotion/action. For example, a faculty member works at UVM for one year as an Assistant Professor and goes up for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, based mostly on past work. If the Dean has made an agreement of this sort to bring in credit from other universities toward promotion to Associate or Full, it will be helpful to have that specified. Similarly, for faculty being considered for early tenure, it would be helpful to have the early consideration noted by the Chair or Dean along with the justification.
6. Please check all dossiers for technical adequacy prior to submission. The reviewing task is hampered when files lack side bookmarks and/or links don't work; these challenges were noted consistently in three of the 11 units. Thank you to the 8 units where these technical issues were well addressed.
7. We continue to find many external letters that are clearly not at "at arms length". It is incumbent upon Chairs to solicit letters at appropriate distance for the applicant or explain

why this did not happen (e.g., a very specialized field with a limited number of appropriate reviewers).

For Faculty Members Submitting Dossiers

1. The CV of most faculty members list publications using a standard citation format associated with their discipline (e.g., APA, AMA, MLA, Chicago). Problems arise in a small number of cases where a citation standard is not used; this often means several elements are missing (e.g., no names listed; names listed but authorship sequence not clear). We encourage faculty to list scholarship in their CV as if they were citations appearing in a scholarly journal, to include all of the same elements (e.g., authors, year, article title, journal/book, volume, page numbers, doi if available).
2. Many faculty members engage in collaborative research and authorship. While we have noted improvements within some units from year to year, too many faculty members still do not adequately describe the extent and nature of their participation in collaborative endeavors. For example, when a faculty member is the third of six authors, what exactly did the person do to contribute to this publication? It is incumbent upon each faculty member to explain this in the narrative section of the dossier. This is especially important in fields (e.g., medical sciences) where there may be different meanings attached to first and last authorship. Sometimes the last position means the least contribution; however, we have learned from our medical college colleagues that sometimes last means the person who runs a lab, conceptualized the study, and garnered the funding -- two very different meanings that we cannot discern with explanation beyond a citation.
3. We know there are many productive scholars at UVM garnering external funding -- and they should be credited for these accomplishments. We regularly review dossiers where it appears individuals are inappropriately taking credit for grants that someone else wrote and/or where someone else is the principal investigator. Like publications, if a faculty member co-authored a funded grant they should take credit for their contribution by specifying the extent and nature of the contribution to garnering the funding. The concern we see with some regularity is that a faculty member gets a large grant and then either hires people to work on the grant or distributes smaller sub-awards to individuals or groups. In these cases the receiving faculty member who was hired or got a sub-award lists the full (much larger) amount on their own CV, giving the impression that they have been responsible for garnering these funds. While we recognize that it not done with any ill intent, the PSC sees this frequently enough to raise it as a concern.

Gratitude for the Work

Being on the PSC entails some serious work -- this year the review of 57 sabbaticals and 103 RPR cases (with possibly more to come). While you wouldn't be surprised to hear PSC members comment on the workload associated with this committee, one of the most common sentiments expressed by PSC members to each other is our gratitude for the opportunity to review the stunning breadth and depth of work being produced by UVM faculty members. Members of the PSC approach each dossier with great respect for the work of our UVM colleagues and take pride in carefully and independently reviewing and presenting each dossier. Being a PSC

member offers a unique opportunity to glimpse into fields of study we would typically not encounter otherwise. It is a constant learning experience and contributes to our sense that UVM is special place, fortunate to have so many amazing people doing so much amazing work!