SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSÉ, CA 95192

SS-F13-8, Sense of the Senate Resolution, Endorsing a Proposal to Reform the SJSU Policy on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion by Adopting the "Flexible Achievement" Plan

Legislative History: At its meeting of December 9, 2013, the Academic Senate approved the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Senator Peter for the Professional Standards Committee.

SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION
ENDORSING A PROPOSAL TO REFORM THE SJSU POLICY ON RETENTION, TENURE, AND PROMOTION BY ADOPTING THE "FLEXIBLE ACHIEVEMENT" PLAN

Resolved: The Academic Senate of San José State University endorses the general plan for reforming the criteria and standards of our Retention, Tenure, and Promotion policy as outlined in the attachment; be it further

Resolved: That endorsement of this resolution is undertaken with the understanding that Professional Standards will produce a full scale policy revision based on this plan that will be subject to normal deliberation by the Senate; be it further

Resolved: That Professional Standards Committee may bring forward additional Sense of the Senate Resolutions to seek the Senate's advice on other key decisions related to RTP reform.

Rationale:

Last year, the Professional Standards Committee gathered extensive information on RTP reform and summarized it in our report the Academic Senate. After studying alternative RTP policies, interviewing key actors in our existing system, and conducting a broad survey of faculty attitudes here at SJSU, we concluded that there were four key themes that form the core objectives for policy reform. Those themes are "*flexibility in career development*, *parsimony of documentation*, *clarity of criteria*, and *fairness in*

procedures."[1] The general plan outlined below is intended to deal primarily with flexibility, clarity, and fairness. Parsimony is being addressed elsewhere.

Flexibility in career development is a goal widely supported in theory but difficult to implement in practice. The current policy contains beautiful language seeking to foster this flexibility:

> *It is important to note that all faculty -- even all faculty in the same department -- need not conform to the same model. San José State University seeks diversity within its faculty and in the ways individual faculty members seek to be effective in furthering the educational mission of the university*.[2]

Unfortunately, the existing policy does not provide specific mechanisms to implement this vision of a diverse faculty, other than to provide verbal exhortations. Since the policy lacks any structure for implementing this vision, the vision tends not to be implemented. Faculty are generally expected to do just enough in each category of achievement, and there is no consistent way to decide whether a very high level of achievement in one dimension of a career can compensate for a relative weakness elsewhere.

To produce criteria and standards for promotion and tenure that are more transparent and flexible than the current system, but allow for high standards based upon merit, Professional Standards proposes a "flexible achievement" plan.

A central part of the proposal is to divide our two criteria (Effectiveness in Academic Assignment; Scholarly, and Artistic or Professional Achievement) into three categories, Effectiveness in Academic Assignment; Scholarly, Artistic or Professional Achievement, and Service. The three criteria can be evaluated separately, with decisions over tenure and promotion to be based upon adding together the results of these three separate evaluations. In this way we can set a high standard for tenure or promotion, but faculty would be able to reach that standard in a variety of ways. The standards would require a minimum level of achievement in each of the three categories, but some faculty would display moderate accomplishments in all three categories, while others would be more specialized in one or two.

Not only would such a system be flexible, we believe it would be more fair and transparent. Currently the criteria and standards are sufficiently vague that the appropriate balance between teaching and scholarship and service is debated

---

[1] "Report to the Academic Senate on The Current State of our Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Policy by the Professional Standards Committee," May 6, 2013.

[2] S98-8, Preamble.

committee by committee. Under the proposal, committees would simply judge the level of achievement a candidate has attained in the separate categories of teaching, of scholarly, professional, or artistic achievement, and of service. Provided a candidate meets the minimum expectations for each of the three categories, it would not be the role of any committee to deliberate over the balance of achievements between the three categories.

To give structure to this system, the plan outlines five separate levels of achievement. The policy will provide generic definitions of what will be required for each of the five levels in each category, but departments will be encouraged—especially in scholarship—to craft their own written expectations for achievement that are customized to their disciplines. For example, a department would specify the number and quality of professional accomplishments that would be minimally expected, what greater number and quality of accomplishments would normally be expected to be credited with higher levels of performance, and finally what even higher level of accomplishments would be regarded as truly outstanding.

Approved: *December 3, 2013*

Vote: *10-0-0*

Present: *Green, Maldonado-Colon, Brown, Peter, Bros-Seeman, Kauppila, Gottheil, Cara, Kallis, Du*

Absent: *None*

Financial Impact: A sense of the senate resolution has no financial impact; should the Senate and the University eventually decide to implement a new policy the Professional Standards Committee does not anticipate financial implications beyond those created by the present RTP system.

Workload Impact: A sense of the senate resolution has minimal workload impact apart from distribution; should the University decide to implement a new RTP policy based on the outlines in this resolution, then there would be workload associated with developing the "expectations for achievement" and also in educating faculty more generally on the new system.

The "Flexible Achievement" Plan
A General Approach to the Reform of the RTP policy at SJSU

1. The existing two categories of achievement will be reformulated into three separate categories:
    a. Academic Assignment; primarily teaching for instructional faculty
    b. Service to the University and Community.
    c. Scholarly or Artistic or Professional Achievement. This will continue as before.

2. At every level of review, faculty will receive an evaluation in each of the three separate categories of achievement.

3. Each evaluation will be on a scale as follows:

    (5) Truly Outstanding. This level of achievement is among the best that can ever be observed at San José State University, and is rare.

    (4) Excellent. This level of achievement is among the best that can be regularly observed at San José State University.

    (3) Good. This level of achievement exceeds that necessary to fulfill the basic functions of the university, and is praiseworthy.

    (2) Minimum. This is the level that is required to fulfill the basic functions of the university. In order to attain tenure or promotion a candidate must exceed the minimum in at least one other category.

    (1) Needs improvement. A candidate who needs improvement in one of the three categories of achievement is ineligible for tenure or promotion.

4. The Basic Approach.

    Tenure, promotion to Associate, and promotion to full Professor will be granted to faculty who meet the minimum in all three categories and also reach a designated level of overall achievement measured by adding together the ratings from each of the three categories

    In this way candidates can determine whether to pursue modest achievements that are relatively balanced between teaching, scholarship, and service, or whether to pursue a greater degree of specialization.

The committee has not set the numerical level for the various attainments of tenure and the two levels of promotion—that level of detail will be left to the policy itself. However, to help the Senate understand the way in which the basic flexible achievement plan would work, an appendix is provided with an example of how the system would allow for various profiles.

5. Early decisions.

   Early decisions will be handled by requiring higher levels of overall achievement for a positive early decision than would be required at the "normal" time. For example tenure a year early might require a score somewhat higher than that needed for tenure after the normal review period, representing the need for a higher level of confidence in a lifetime decision that is made after an abbreviated review period.

6. Distinguishing Professor from Associate.

   Promotion to Professor can be distinguished from tenure and promotion to Associate by requiring a somewhat higher overall level of achievement.

7. Establishing clear expectations of achievement

   In lieu of the current system of "Department Guidelines," the new policy will establish "expectations for achievement" which will more specifically define what is required to attain the various ratings in each of the three categories.

   a. The new policy will prepare university-wide expectations for achievement for all three categories. These expectations will apply to a candidate unless the department elects to create its own "Department expectations for achievement." Department expectations, similar to department guidelines, must be approved through a process that will be specified in the policy.

   b. To craft the university-wide expectations for Scholarship, the Professional Standards committee will solicit suggestions from all departments, and will attempt to codify the most commonly held expectations. Generic expectations, however, will not work for many departments and programs—which will need to craft their own expectations as they currently do with department guidelines.

   c. The university-wide expectations for Teaching and Service will be drafted by the Professional Standards Committee and circulated for comment before incorporation into the proposed policy. The policy will provide for

the possibility that Departments may create their own Department Expectations in these two categories, but it is generally expected that there will be fewer departments that need to do so than in the more varied category of Scholarship.

d. All the defined “expectations for achievement” must describe a wide range of achievement between the “needs improvement” and “Truly Outstanding,” so as to allow for a range of professional development profiles.

8. Establishing the minimum levels of achievement

a. In light of the current policy’s statement that teaching is “primary” given the mission of the CSU, the new policy will require a teaching threshold at least as high as the existing policy.

b. Since “Service” is a responsibility that directly concerns the welfare of colleagues, a minimal level of service will be established that encompasses a fair share of the workload needed to keep their departments functioning well.

c. The minimum level of scholarly, professional, or artistic achievement will be determined only after the committee receives the input from departments that will arrive when consulting over how to set up the “generic” University-wide expectations in this category.

d. The purpose of establishing minimum levels of achievement is to assure that each candidate can appropriately contribute to the basic functions of the University. The policy will make clear, however, that achieving the minimum in the three categories is insufficient to warrant tenure or promotion, which will depend on an overall level of attainment in which the minimum is exceeded in one or more categories.

9. Establishing and Revising the expectations of achievement

a. The policy will organize a means for the creation and approval of the published “department expectations” similar to the current process for approving department guidelines. The policy may provide for the external review of expectations—to gauge whether the expectations are both rigorous and realistic given the resources available.

b. The policy will provide for the review of “department expectations,” so that they can be periodically revised to reflect changes in the disciplines and/or changing conditions for faculty. If there are changes, policy will protect

faculty by allowing them to choose whether to be evaluated under the old or the new expectations.

10. Appealing unique cases of achievement

The policy will provide a means for candidates to request special consideration if their achievements were not adequately addressed by the applicable "expectations of achievement." In short, there will still be a role for committees to examine individual cases and to apply judgment when achievements are unique or otherwise not covered by normal expectations.

11. Appointment letters

a. As under the current policy, all appointment letters will need to conform with the requirements of the new ARTP (Appointment, Retention, Tenure and Promotion) policy.

b. The Policy will provide a means for appointment letters to alter the basic range of flexibility permitted by the policy in designated situations.

c. The policy will also provide a mechanism for the renegotiation of appointment letters.

12. Phase-in period and implementation timeframe.

The policy will provide for a phase-in period, with faculty "caught in between" allowed choice between the old and the new policies.

APPENDIX: Hypothetical examples to illustrate the flexible achievement system.

If the level of attainment needed for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor after a normal review period were set to “8”, then candidates could achieve the minimum score with six different profiles, given that a “2” represents the minimum in each category.

Profile 1:
2 Teaching
2 Service
4 Scholarship

Profile 2:
2 Teaching
3 Service
3 Scholarship

Profile 3:
2 Teaching
4 Service
2 Scholarship

Profile 4
3 Teaching
2 Service
3 Scholarship

Profile 5
3 Teaching
3 Service
2 Scholarship

Profile 6
4 Teaching
2 Service
2 Scholarship