**Final Report of the Provost’s *ad hoc* Committee on Promotion and Tenure**

**30 September 2011**

***Committee Charge and Report***

The Provost’s *ad hoc* Committee on Promotion and Tenure was convened two years ago, in September of 2009, by Provost Dr. Micheal Crafton. Members were appointed to represent each of Clayton State University’s constituent colleges and schools: Stephen Burnett (A&S), Anthony Giovannitti (CIMS), Ron Jackson (A&S), Louis Jourdan (Business), Melanie Poudevigne (A&S), Susan Sanner (Health), and Kurt-Alexander Zeller (A&S). In fall of 2010, Betty Lane replaced Susan Sanner as the College of Health representative.

The committee was charged to examine the promotion and tenure policies at Clayton State University and to make recommendations for changes that would improve the process to better serve the needs of both the institution and the faculty, while ensuring that all Board of Regents mandates and requirements continued to be met. The committee already has made a number of proposals for “tweaks” to the current system, all but one of which have been adopted by votes of the Clayton State University faculty. We now present our finished proposal, which retains the timelines adopted by the Clayton State faculty vote in the spring of 2010 and proposes some significant changes in the way promotion and tenure evaluation occurs. We recognize that adoption of our proposal will require further action upon the part of schools and colleges before implementation of a new tenure and promotion structure at Clayton State University can be considered complete; however, we believe that our proposal provides a viable way forward in overcoming many of the aspects of the current system that we repeatedly and consistently have heard are frustrating for faculty (both those undergoing promotion and tenure review ***and*** those charged with reviewing those faculty colleagues) and administrators alike.

Our work began with a thorough review of the promotion and tenure systems and procedures in place at many of our sister institutions in the University System of Georgia and a systematic survey of faculty and administrators at Clayton State about how well the current system here does and does not serve their needs and those of the institution as a whole. We got an earful. It quickly became obvious that the current system at Clayton State is one of the more complicated promotion and tenure procedures in the USG. The amount of material and documentation faculty members are expected to assemble (and to review, when they serve as reviewers) is considerably greater than that at many other USG institutions. We also heard again and again that many faculty members and some administrators feel that the current structure encourages faculty members to spread themselves “a mile wide and an inch deep” across an enormous range of activities in order to rack up “checks” in a requisite number of *different* categories in what was frequently called “the Chinese menu approach.” These respondents felt strongly that the current system discourages faculty members from concentrating their energies in very specific activities within each of the broad areas (Teaching, Service, Scholarly/Creative Activities and Professional Development) that are all the Board of Regents really requires—and thus, that the current system discourages faculty from capitalizing on their individual strengths and making what could be their strongest contribution to the success of the institution. A significant number of faculty members expressed the perception that while the current system technically allows for a “double check” that might recognize achievement that exceeds standard expectations, in practice that option is almost never utilized. Thus, some faculty members feel there is little incentive to truly excel in an area of activity, since that appears to carry no more weight in promotion and tenure evaluation than merely satisfactory performance, while many others feel that there is a certain inequity when their extraordinary efforts routinely receive the same “check” as the clearly sufficient, but hardly extraordinary, efforts of colleagues. This state of affairs rankles, particularly when institutional needs create the necessity for those extraordinary efforts. (One example that frequently came up was the extremely large advising load in certain disciplines relative to others. The university *needs* these professors to devote more of their time and energy to advising than most of their faculty colleagues do; yet generally they receive the same check as their colleagues who are equally competent advisors but advise fewer than a quarter of their advising load.) It seems to be a widely held belief that the current system rewards breadth of effort at the expense of depth of effort and that a better, more flexible balance between the two would yield greater rewards for the institution. We believe that the system we are proposing would create that flexibility.

We also heard, from both faculty and administrators, that the current system did not serve particularly well the needs of faculty on administrative appointments (such as department chairs), who typically teach far less than other faculty and have far more non-teaching responsibilities. (We also found, rather late in the game, language in the current handbook that, if taken literally, would require department chairs and deans to provide promotion and tenure reviews of *themselves*—clearly, that needed to be changed!) Under our new proposal, which will allow faculty members to reach the required threshold for promotion and tenure with greater activity in one or more of the Board of Regents’ required criteria (Teaching, Service, or Scholarly/Creative Activities and Professional Development) and somewhat lesser activity in others, provided that a basic standard is met in each, faculty on administrative appointments will be able to receive appropriate recognition and reward for superior performance in their administrative tasks, which will fall primarily under the rubric of Service.

We heard quite a lot about the workload of faculty charged with reviewing the promotion and tenure materials of their colleagues who are applying for promotion and/or tenure, and we also experienced it firsthand, as several members of the *ad hoc* Committee are, or have been, members of their departmental or school/college promotion and tenure committees. One recommendation we have already made, and which already has been adopted, is a change in the timeline for consideration of promotion and tenure, pre-tenure, and post-tenure reviews, moving consideration of pre- and post-tenure reviews to the spring semester, rather than confining all reviews to the fall semester. (For members of the College of Arts and Sciences Promotion and Tenure Committee, which reviewed 32 portfolios during the 2010-2011 academic year but fortunately got two semesters rather than only one in which to accomplish the job, that change may have been crucial to making October survivable.) That calendar change is preserved in the current proposal, as is our proposal, approved by the faculty in May of 2010, to make the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee responsible only for reviewing those portfolios that received at least one unfavorable recommendation (portfolios that receive favorable recommendations throughout the departmental and school or college levels of review now go directly to the Provost) and for reviewing and approving proposals for promotion and tenure guidelines for individual schools, colleges, or departments that may be more specific or rigorous (for instance, in order to meet disciplinary accreditation standards) than those of the university as a whole.

One way in which Clayton State’s promotion and tenure system is noticeably more onerous than that at many of its sister institutions is in the sheer volume of paper documentation required by the guidelines for the promotion and/or tenure portfolio. We heard this complaint from faculty undergoing reviews, from faculty conducting reviews, and from every level of administration. It seems that *nobody* truly likes the current documentation system. However, we have been unable to identify *any* element of the current documentation required by the handbook that *most* reviewers seem willing to part with. Every bit of required “documentation” seems to have a sizable number of fans who think that that particular bit of documentation is indispensable—while “something else” needs to be jettisoned. But a large number of “somebody elses” is equally attached to that “something else.” Not even the element of the portfolio that got the most “votes” as unnecessary (grade distributions) got a real majority considering it superfluous.

The only thing we can get an overwhelming majority of people to agree upon is that if the university wants to require use of a particular computer program or a particular document (the typical targets here were Digital Measures and the Summary of Professional Activities Form) for promotion and tenure purposes, then those programs or forms should automatically format data in the way and in the order in which they are required to appear; faculty members should not have to spend hours massaging a computer program’s output into the actual format required. (This is particularly true in the case of a program or service for which the university is *paying*—don’t buy something unless it actually does the job!) We agree wholeheartedly with the sentiment, but we can think of no way to enforce it in Faculty Handbook language, so we merely report the recommendation! We also second the recommendation, which we heard frequently, that the university should supply all faculty members the statistical information from the Student Evaluation of Instructor instruments in a standard format, with graphs on standard scales and axes, in order to facilitate apples-to-apples comparisons. Faculty members and department chairs should not be responsible for formatting this information; however, again the Faculty Handbook does not seem to be the place to mandate effectively what is primarily an administrative matter, but we hope that bringing this recommendation to the Provost’s attention will result in positive changes.

Consequently, the one area of our charge in which we have had to admit defeat is in accommodating the universal desire to reduce documentation requirements. We have concluded that if reviewers wish faculty to include less documentation in their portfolios, they first will have to specify what types of claims they are willing to accept *without* paper documentation! No faculty member undergoing review is voluntarily going to risk not having enough documentation until given explicit permission *by the reviewers* not to include something. This cannot be a bottom-up change. Many of the members of this committee believe that the most appropriate place to document many small things (such as membership in professional societies) is likely to be through revisions to the Annual Evaluation forms and process. (For instance, once membership in a society was documented and noted for that year on the Annual Evaluation form, the faculty member really would have no need to dig up old membership invoices and stuff them into a promotion portfolio years later, since all applicable Annual Evaluation forms are to be included in the portfolio.) However, when it asked, this committee (somewhat to its relief) was specifically told to leave any changes to Annual Evaluation policies and procedures to someone else and so we have not addressed that issue.

***Proposal and Explanation***

Attached to this report is a large segment of the Faculty Handbook (all of Section 205 and the first part of Section 206) re-written to incorporate our full proposal. The attachment does not include re-designed forms, although certainly these also would be necessary to implement the proposal. (The chair and some other members of this committee are willing to work on re-designing the forms if our colleagues choose to implement our proposal, but at this stage there is little point in spending more time worrying over the fine points of form design unless our faculty colleagues like the proposal itself and wish to adopt it.)

The most significant change is a new evaluation scale to replace the former system of requiring faculty members under review to earn a specified number of checkmarks in a specified number of different areas of endeavor within each of the general categories of Teaching, Service, and Scholarly/Creative Activities and Professional Development. Instead, we are proposing that faculty members be allowed to make the case that they have met or exceeded expectations in each of these large categories holistically. Some will continue to demonstrate their contribution to the success of the institution through competent performance in a broad range of activities within a category. However, others will be free to choose to make the argument that they meet or exceed expectations in a category by significant and outstanding contributions to a more limited range of activities that best fit their aptitudes and interests. The committee believes this arrangement will strengthen the university by allowing it to get the maximum benefit from the particular skills and passions of its faculty. An ancillary benefit would be that, since it would no longer matter how many different “evidentiary sources” are represented in a faculty member’s promotion or tenure application, both the faculty member under review and the reviewers will be freed from the sometimes Byzantine question of trying to parse exactly where to “count” a given activity. (For instance, one of the more frequent questions we heard was, “Would someone please explain what the heck the difference between a ‘Support to Campus Activities’ and a ‘Contribution to Campus Life’ is supposed to be?”) In each of the broad categories, certain elements (positive responses on student evaluations in Teaching, evidence of effective committee service in Service, and published or performed scholarship as defined by each school or college in Scholarly/Creative Activities and Professional Development) have been deemed so important that their presence is mandated. Beyond those mandatory activities, faculty may choose to demonstrate and explain the noteworthiness of their achievement in each of the areas of Teaching, Service, and Scholarly/Creative Activities and Professional Development as a whole. We have explicitly listed the current evidentiary sources as representative examples of *some* of the Teaching, Service, or Scholarly activity in which faculty may choose to engage precisely so that it will be clear that no one should “lose credit” for past activity, but it is not our intention that that list should be viewed as either prescriptive or exhaustive.

Under the system we are proposing, it will be to the advantage of faculty members undergoing review to take greater responsibility to be clear and thorough in explaining the significance of their work, but that already has been high on the wish list we have heard from faculty and administrators doing the reviewing even under the current system.

We propose an evaluation scale in which each of the criteria, or categories, mandated by the Board of Regents (Academic Achievement, Superior Teaching, Outstanding Service, and Scholarly Activities and Professional Development) will receive a numerical evaluation on a scale from 0 (no evidence) to 4. As in the same numerical scale which we attach to our students’ course grades (at least in the subjects in their major area of endeavor), a rating of 2 will represent satisfactorily meeting expectations in that category, while a rating below 2 will be insufficient to meet expectations, and ratings of 3 and 4 will represent exceeding expectations for satisfactory performance with good or excellent performance, respectively. We hope that this analogy to the system which we have agreed is adequate for evaluating our students will be useful, particularly to clarify the intent that it should not be unusual (as the current “double check” is) for faculty work to be acknowledged to exceed expectations of satisfactory performance. We also are proposing that schools or colleges and, especially, departments should provide for their faculty documents that “specify the standard for the candidate to achieve scores of 3 or 4” within each of the categories. This proposal is consistent with the element of our original charge that urged us to seek ways to strengthen the ability of departments to have a stronger voice in the promotion and tenure evaluation of their own faculty.

Because awards of tenure and promotion are significant honors, recognizing more than merely satisfactory performance, our proposal is that a total of 11 points be achieved among the four Board of Regents criteria, with each category achieving at least a satisfactory rating of 2, for tenure or promotion to associate professor. (It is assumed that most faculty will “meet expectations” and receive a 2 in the criterion of Academic Achievement, or possession of the appropriate academic credentials, though perhaps there will be ways to exceed expectations in this area, too.) This arrangement would provide for faculty to meet the criteria in several different ways. For instance (again assuming that all have a 2 in Academic Achievement), one successful candidate might receive a rating of 4 in Teaching, a 3 in Service, and a 2 in Scholarly Activities, while another candidate might achieve success with 3s across the board and a third (perhaps a faculty member on an administrative appointment) would be equally successful with a 2 in Teaching, a 4 in Service, and a 3 in Scholarly Activities and Professional Development. For promotion to Professor, candidates would be expected to achieve a total score of 12, with each criterion achieving at least 2, or “meets expectations.”

We believe that this structure will benefit both faculty and the university by providing greater flexibility for both to capitalize on the individual strengths and enthusiasms of each faculty member, while at the same time ensuring that no faculty member fails to meet expectations in any of the criteria required by the Board of Regents. That flexibility exists both within each criterion, by providing a holistic evaluation of all activity within the rubric of that criterion rather than relying on an accumulation of checks indicating different activities, and also among all the criteria, by providing several different ways that faculty achievement can be apportioned among the four criteria (while still meeting expectations in each) and still meet the standard for promotion and/or tenure. (And in so doing we also have specified the achievement standard for promotion to Senior Lecturer, another element of our original charge that is unclear in our current handbook.)

We hope that our colleagues will agree with our findings and suggestion and adopt the proposal we are putting forward with the intention of making our institution a richer and more rewarding environment for all of us, as well as for all of our students. It has been a stimulating and enlightening (and yes, sometimes exhausting) two years for us as we have grappled with these issues, and all the members of the committee have brought their very best efforts to the endeavor. We regret that we were unable to find what we considered a workable solution to the documentation concern, but we believe we have put forward a plan that will, if adopted, address all of the other major issues that were presented to us in our charge and which consistently came up in our subsequent conversations with all stakeholders, and we look forward to working with the Faculty Senate and the Provost in the process to move that plan from proposal to policy.

Provost’s *ad hoc* Committee on Promotion and Tenure

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