

Rules Committee Minutes
March 23, 2018

Attending: David Gross, David Hoagland, MJ Peterson, Rebecca Spencer, Wilmore Webley,

1. Response to recent UMass Boston Faculty Council inquiries

Two recent documents were received from the UMass Boston Faculty Council via Robert Lublin, Chair of the UMass Intercampus Faculty Council, with a request to share the documents with relevant Amherst governing bodies in order to develop collaborations with the Boston Faculty Council in addressing the issues discussed. One document was a letter to the Intercampus Faculty Council and the second was a report of the Boston Faculty Council Promotion, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Service Sub-committee (PROGRESS). Both dealt with the issue of gathering data about the impact of race and gender on service, tenure, and promotion. The letter quoted a 2015 New England Association of Schools and Colleges Review Team Report that stated that “faculty members believed that the declining weight given to service in evaluations for tenure and promotion were ‘undermining personal success’”. The PROGRESS Report advanced several recommendations, among them “that the University begin to *systematically* gather, analyze and share accurate data on faculty hiring, tenure and promotion in relation to gender, race/ethnicity and service load”.

To help in formulating a response, the Rules Committee invited Professor Joya Misra of UMass Amherst’s Sociology Department, to today’s meeting to discuss these issues as an expert as well as one consulted in setting up the survey used in the PROGRESS report. Misra is involved in an NSF study between UMass Amherst, Univ. of North Carolina, and Univ. of Maryland College Park addressing equity in service and other aspects of academic careers.

For collecting workload data from faculty members, the Committee discussed with Misra the relative advantages of using commercially available survey software as opposed to such software developed in-house. Control of the collected data and analyses alongside the ability to tailor the software to specific needs were cited as key advantages for the latter. The in-house UMass Amherst “Faculty Workload System” employs Excel for input of data and has been used in conjunction with the NSF project by a significant number of UMass Amherst departments to develop interventions to equalize teach and service loads. Misra noted that inequities tended to be greatest at the Associate Professor-level and are a reason sometimes cited for delays in Professor promotion. Inequities in service/teaching based on gender and minority status also seem to be larger at this intermediate career stage than before or after.

Some of today’s discussion focused on the ways that service, teaching, and research are evaluated in AFRs and promotion packages, with a committee consensus that these evaluations are sometimes flawed by incomplete data collection and/or improper weighting of service/teaching tasks. While UMass Amherst has collected some data relevant to the UMass Boston request, complete information is lacking and might be gathered as part of system-wide effort to address teaching/service inequities.

MJ Peterson agreed to draft a document summarizing today's discussion and forward it to UMass Boston. The Rules Committee also suggested this issue be forwarded to Lublin as an appropriate item for the upcoming Intercampus Faculty Council meeting in April.