

Faculty Grievance Committee Report to the Faculty Council

February 2017

Submitted by Anna Beeber and Chris McLaughlin, 2016-2017 co-chairs

Members 2016-2017 (including school, faculty category and year that current term expires):

Beeber, Anna (Nursing, Associate Prof., 2017); De Paris, Kristina (Medicine, Assistant Prof., 2017); Felix, Ana (Medicine, Fixed-term, 2017); Jagger, Pamela (Arts & Sciences, Associate Prof., 2019); Kumar, Priya (Medicine, Fixed-term, 2018); Lambert, Michael (Social Work, Full Prof., 2019); McLaughlin, Christopher (Government, Associate Prof., 2018); Posner, Beth (Law, Fixed-term, 2019); Roush, Christopher (Journalism, Full Prof., 2018); Smith, Meredith (Government, Assistant Prof., 2019); Thornburg, Thomas (Government, Full Prof., 2017); Vigil, Ariana (Arts & Sciences, Assistant Prof., 2018)

Committee Charge:

The Faculty Grievance Committee (“FGC”) is authorized to hear and advise on all grievances raised by members of the faculty other than grievances concerning tenure decisions and issues relating to the termination of employment that are under the jurisdiction of Faculty Hearing Committee. The FGC also hears appeals of complaints filed by members of the faculty with the University’s Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (“EOC”).

Actions:

In 2015-2016, the FGC met with six faculty members regarding potential grievances. None of these meetings led to the filing of formal grievances after the FGC chairs offered guidance to the potential grievants. Instead, the faculty member involved chose to pursue other University options (Ombuds, EOC) or to resolve the issue informally.

Midway through the 2016-2017 academic year, the FGC has two pending grievances, both involving denial of promotion to full professor. One of these grievances also involves an appeal of an EOC complaint. The FGC has met with three other faculty members who were contemplating filing formal grievances but have yet to do so.

The FGC chairs have been working with University counsel to amend its procedures to better reflect University policies (Including a requirement to offer professional mediation prior to the initiation of the grievance process) and its changing workload. In 2016, the FGC procedures were amended to add additional fixed-term faculty members in recognition of the increased reliance on fixed-term faculty members throughout the University. In 2017, the FGC will revise its hearing procedures and submit them to Faculty Council for approval.

Observations:

1. Faculty members benefit from having a senior faculty mentors to help them better understand their departments’ process and expectations for review and/or promotion.
2. All University departments should have a process for regularly reviewing ranking and promotion procedures and ensuring that its faculty members are aware of those procedures.
3. The FGC does not believe it is the best avenue for appeals of EOC complaints, which are often complex and always involve the application of lengthy federal and state laws about which FGC members are not experts. The FGC is working with University counsel to propose alternate appeal avenues for EOC matters, which might include a specialized faculty committee that receives extensive training in EOC law.