

CAS Chairs Meeting
April 12, 2007
SUMMARY

PRESENT: Russell Cook, Dipa Choudhury, Brian Barr, David Rivers, Victor Delclos, Joe Chiarrochi, Amanda Thomas, Jen Lowry, Dale Snow, Sharon Nell, Ilona McGuinness, Bryan Crockett, Chuck Cheape, Diana Schaub, Ben Benokritis, Rob Pond, Ron Tanner, Janet Headley, Randy Jones, Steve Fowl, Michael Burton, Joe Walsh, Diana Schaub, Jai Ryu

ABSENT: Kathy, Siren.

Announcements – The announcements were reviewed. Chairs were reminded about assessments plans that will be put online. The mathematical sciences department has a revised assessment plan that will be useful for everyone to see as an example. It will be put online in the near future.

Agenda

Annual review

Examples of a letter from a chair and a teaching reflection were provided to chairs. A discussion ensued about what made annual review difficult – (1) difficult faculty (2) if someone is outstanding in one area but only adequate in another (e.g. service) (3) are there conflicting aims for the letters (tenure, promotion, annual review, compensation)?

Some suggestions about current practices in individual departments –

Reflection on teaching prior to student evaluations and a departmental meeting to discuss overall achievement of learning aims (Physics). Classics has a somewhat similar process where the entire department goes out to discuss teaching, sequencing of courses, student learning in an informal atmosphere. This is distinct from the evaluation of an individual's teaching. Randy Jones suggested that criteria for all departments be put online and this will help alleviate concerns about inconsistencies in departmental criteria. Jim said this was already planned and there would be a chairs meeting about the criteria and their application next year. A suggestion from Dale Snow was to engage the faculty member whether junior or senior to the chair in the process. Ask them to help, provide input, take ownership of the evaluation

and more especially of any issue that needs improvement. Develop a plan for improvement with the faculty member.

Another major topic of the conversation was about a perceived dichotomy between annual review as a strictly annual process and the need to report more summative judgments on overall progress towards tenure and promotion for probationary faculty. E.g. can someone be outstanding (overall? In one year? In one or two areas?) and not get tenure. Clearly the annual report needs to speak to both issues and can have different “lenses” or “time windows” over which to comment, (e.g. “outstanding this year but have overall concern about progress towards tenure because these were the first publications”) Progress towards tenure does need to be addressed. Therefore a general rule is that chairs should be careful about giving tenure-track faculty a rating of “outstanding” and sending anything that may seem like conflicting messages.

It also seems that tension exists because faculty will focus on the immediate reward structure as well and so work towards an overall outstanding rating for any one particular year but not necessarily have a long-term view of their research and teaching. Perhaps long-term career development workshops or support for both probationary and mid-career faculty can be provided. Perhaps faculty should be asked to comment and reflect on their research as they do on their teaching in providing some planning and background. Psychology is redoing their guidelines and criteria on annual review and will be paying special attention to the issue of the perceived tension between annual review and progress towards tenure. Perhaps they will share this with chairs when it is ready.

There was also discussion of what to do for non-tenure track faculty and certainly the letters are important for those faculty and in programs with large numbers of introductory or core sequence sections (e.g. Modern Languages, Writing) the coordinator of that course can have input with the chair about that NTT faculty member’s evaluation.

There was a review of the dossiers prepared by faculty for tenure and promotion. Two examples were provided and Ron Tanner and Vic Delclos spoke to each. Some things that were mentioned include the need for external letters, the difficulty in keeping up with faculty scholarship given how diverse it can be in any one department and the need for specialization. Teaching portfolios as a long term tools towards building a tenure and

promotion dossier is useful. Classroom observation and internal and external mentors were also provided to these faculty. Limits are set for mid-term review (about 15 pages plus appendices) and tenure dossier (about 25 pages plus appendices). The nature of a teaching portfolio includes examples of a range of student work and reflection as well as those of the faculty member.

The final item on the agenda was the survey by Lovell Smith on students choosing majors. It was suggested to invite Lovell in to discuss methodology and that this topic would be taken up in the context of building majors, working with majors and the major advising survey that is conducted by the Dean of First Year Students.