

## FY2021 Standards and Procedures on Promotion and Tenure (SPPT)

### Final Report April 31, 2021

**Committee Members:** Anil Misra, Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering (Chair); Irma Brasseur-Hock, Special Education; Brad Cokelet, Philosophy; Richard Godbeer, History; Araceli Masterson-Algar, Spanish & Portuguese.

**Ex-officio:** Lua Yuille, FacEx Representative, Chris Brown, Vice Provost, Faculty Development

The committee met once during the fall semester (November 20, 2020) and five times in the spring semester (January 21, February 12, March 12, March 19 and April 9, 2021). Minutes of all meetings have been submitted to University Governance. The Committee's activities specific to the 2021 charges are summarized below.

1. Standing Charges: The committee reviewed and provided suggestions for modifications to comply with the Faculty Senate Rules and Regulations, Article VI, from the units listed below.

- Jewish Studies
- Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
- School of Social Welfare
- Applied Behavioral Science

2. FY 2021 Specific Charges:

1. In relation to charge 1 - "Report on how faculty members are experiencing the stop in the tenure clock in response to the pandemic. Does the committee foresee any issues or concerns with the break in time? Make recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts", the committee held a detailed discussion as described in the Appendix.
2. In relation to charge 2 – "Review FSRR VI. Promotion and Tenure, including FSRR 6.4.3.1. ..."its needs should be filled with a different individual." (See the American Association of University Professors 1968 Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure)," the committee made the following recommendation:
  - Revise 6.4.3.1, as follows:  
"Non-reappointment may be justified by faculty member's poor performance of the responsibilities of the faculty member's position, including teaching (or professional performance), scholarship, or service; by criteria based upon departmental, school or college plans for future faculty development; ~~by budgetary considerations; or by departmental, school or college decision that its needs should be filled with a different individual~~ or a demonstrably bona fide financial exigency, i.e., a severe financial crisis that fundamentally compromises the academic integrity of the institution as a whole and that cannot be alleviated by less drastic means."

In addition, the committee recommended the following reference to AAUP website be added at the end of FSSR 6.1.2.2 "(see section 4.c. of

<https://www.aaup.org/report/recommended-institutional-regulations-academic-freedom-and-tenure>)" [note: the amendment for FSRR 6.4.3.1 and 6.1.2.2 are both on the agenda for the first fall FacEx Meeting]

3. In relation to charge 3 – "Explore ways to collaborate with UCPT regarding challenges identified by that committee as it applies unit criteria to various P&T decisions; consider joint recommendations for standards or changes that could benefit faculty and units considering promotion and tenure decisions," the committee recommended emailing the UCPT chair to explore ways that SPPT can assist UCPT.

## Appendix – SPPT COVID Impact Discussion

The SPPT committee met with Chris Brown and Jennifer Ng on several occasions to discuss how COVID impacts should be taken into account in P&T processes. Three main options were discussed.

### **COVID statements**

SPPT identified various pros and cons of adding mandatory or optional COVID statements to annual review and P&T processes, and the related pros and cons of mandating responses to such statements in external review letters, department evaluations, and college / university level committee and administrative evaluations. The main pros and cons we identified in the discussion are listed on the next page.

SPPT reached consensus that statements are problematic because in our view the cons may well outweigh the pros.

### **Alternative Measures**

SPPT also discussed two alternative strategies for taking COVID impacts into account:

- **Add Extra Year(s):** Automatically adding an extra year or more to tenure clocks and other promotion timelines
- **Use Existing Extensions:** Reminding faculty that (a) they have already been granted one extra year in light of COVID impacts and (b) they already have the option to request two more years (we would recommend automatic approval of any requests due to COVID impact)

### SPPT discussion/meetings

- SPPT initially reached consensus in favor of not using COVID statements and adding an extra year or more (the first alternative plan above). SPPT recognized that Covid statements would provide a venue to collect data that could help guide decisions. Yet there is no reason why this same data could be collected through anonymous surveys. SPPT suggested the latter, but nothing came of it.
- Chris Brown informed SPPT that adding extra years was not feasible as it would require KBOR approval.
- SPPT suggested that KU seek KBOR approval, and gave some suggestions on how to present the argument to KBOR, arguing that a blanket one-year extension would be the most effective and efficient route. Vice Provost Brown responded that this was not a viable option and that he has decided not to pursue it.
- SPPT met again and reached the same consensus in favor of not using COVID statements and exploring the option of using existing procedures for securing extensions (the second alternative plan above).
- Chris Brown then informed SPPT that he had decided to reject the second consensus and asked SPPT to consider a new option, namely having COVID impact narratives included in P&T forms but not in freestanding statements.
- SPPT has not endorsed this approach and regrets that the solutions it suggested have been disregarded. However, SPPT agreed that if the Administration decided to adopt this particular approach, SPPT would give input on proposed changes to the P&T forms. As of this time that process is underway.

## Pros and Cons of Having Statements

### Pros

- Individuals have an additional, specifically curated venue in which to document extra teaching/service responsibilities due to COVID.
- Individuals have an additional, specifically curated venue in which to document reduced research opportunities and thus reduced productivity as scholars due to COVID.
- Individuals have an additional, specifically curated venue in which to document how personal situations due to COVID have had an impact on research/teaching/service.
- This documentation can guide decisions/assessments at department and higher levels. However, there is no reason why this same data could not be collected through anonymous surveys.

### Cons

- Stressful pressure to reveal personal situations that have impact on research/teaching, pours salt in the wounds of those suffering if they are ambivalent about or against sharing personal information
- Asking faculty to 'justify' the impact of Covid on their work requires that they provide a narrative of trauma, which is very troubling from a Diversity and Equity perspective. A broad understanding that the pandemic has had an effect on everyone does not mean that it has done so in the same way, nor that one matters more than the other (which would require that we quantify trauma). It does entail that there be in place support systems attentive to diversity and equity. In the view of the SPPT committee, if the university wants to show a commitment to diversity and equity it should be turning attention to the provision of support systems for our faculty, not to collecting narratives of trauma. The university should be able to know that many of our faculty have assumed additional responsibilities caring for elderly or children, for instance, and should have responses in place, without demanding that the faculty disclose these situations in a mandatory statement.
- This approach assumes that those assessing statements, from department committees and chairs up, somehow have the ability to weigh narratives of trauma and determine a scale of trauma in deciding how to assess productivity or lack thereof during the pandemic.
- This may well lead to reduced standards for P&T and/or subjective application of those standards.
- This may well result in department conflict/mistreatment surrounding (a) who does and does not claim hardship and (b) reactions to any such statements.
  - Damaging and unseemly competition to demonstrate hardship / obstacles
  - Negative judgments on those who claim/document hardships/obstacles (or do not)
  - Conflicting reports from people with intertwined personal lives
- In every meeting on this subject, SPPT asked what purpose such an initiative would fulfil; there is no clear causal relation between writing these statements and anticipated outcomes to promotion and tenure processes. SPPT remains unsure of what the benefits might be, but is quite clear as to its dangers.