



Background for and Highlights of Proposal to Revise Policy 6-303 to change the means by which students provide input in RPT processes

Presented to the Academic Senate, March 30, 2020

by the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Student Input in the RPT Process

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BACKGROUND

The underpinnings of this project include work beginning in 2017-2018 and continuing through 2018-2019 and the current year 2019-2020. University Regulations had long provided for formal roles in the RPT processes for departmental Student Advisory Committees. And, for many years there had been growing concerns about significant indications of biased outcomes in SAC recommendations regarding faculty members of color and women. A first task force was formed in 2017-2018 under leadership of then Associate Vice President for Faculty Amy Wildermuth, chaired by Professor Patricia Hanna (Philosophy and Linguistics), with assistance of Senate Policy Liaison Bob Flores, and other faculty and administrators. This task force was asked to develop a proposal to revise Policy 6-303 to replace the SACs with other more effective methods for student input in RPT processes. Before the task force could bring a final proposal forward for Senate consideration in spring 2018 as planned, however, the concerns over biased SAC evaluations had grown so serious that preemptive administrative action became necessary.

The University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action studied the situation and in April 2018 specifically recommended that the senior vice presidents temporarily implement an exception to the existing Policy regarding the roles of SACs, in order to prevent faculty members and the University from further harm from the evident pattern of bias. Acting on that recommendation, on April 23 the senior vice presidents adopted a temporary exception to the relevant provisions of Policy 6-303, to remain in force until a permanent revision of the Policy is accomplished (which is what is now being proposed to the Senate). That exception replaced the SACs' vote with other student input methods, which were developed by the senior vice presidents' offices in conjunction with ASUU officers. In addition, the administration developed training regarding implicit bias for students involved in RPT reviews.

Meanwhile, the project for a permanent revision of Policy 6-303 was taken up under authority of the Academic Senate. In August 2018, as proposed by then Interim Associate Vice President for Faculty Harriet Hopf, the Senate created a Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Student Input in the RPT Process, which now—in 2019-2020—Associate Vice President for Faculty Sarah Projansky is helping to facilitate, along with Committee Co-Chair Devon Cantwell (graduate student). Since April 2018 and throughout this process, contributions from members of this committee and many other faculty members, administrators, and, quite importantly, student leaders have helped us arrive at the proposal this ad hoc committee is now making to Senate.

This proposal has been presented to the Institutional Policy Committee, and was reviewed by the Academic Senate Executive Committee at its March 16, 2020 meeting. Next, if the Academic Senate approves, with the approvals of SVP Dan Reed, SVP Mike Good, and President Ruth Watkins, the proposal will be presented for final approval of the Board of Trustees. Following this, AVP Projansky and AVP for Academic Affairs Health Sciences Bob Fujinami, as well as the Senate Faculty Review Standards Committee, will work with colleges, schools, and departments to implement the changes.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPECIFIC CHANGES PROPOSED TO POLICY 6-303

The proposed revisions would result in Revision 24 of Policy 6-303; we recommend that Revision 24 would formally take effect as of July 1, 2020 (although preparations for the changed practices for student involvement would begin earlier).

The most significant changes appear in Parts III-A-2-a-I, III-C-3, III-D-7, III-E-6-a, III-G-1-a, III-G-1-d, III-H-1, III-H-5, III-I-2, as described below. A few more minor changes are also proposed and included in the marked version of the Policy, but not described here.

- III-A-2-a-I requires department to include in its approved RPT Statement a description of “procedures for obtaining and incorporating in the review process evidence regarding teaching, which will include input from students.”
- III-C-3 requires department chair to give notice of upcoming RPT reviews to ASUU Student Senator and to department’s RPT-SACs, to ensure training of RPT-SACs, and to provide RPT-SACs with University approved form for RPT-SAC reports. Specifies that training “shall cover, but need not be limited to, the process for and importance of student input into the RPT process, teaching expectations under the departmental RPT Statement, and recognition of unconscious bias.” This *replaces* former passage under which department chair would request that SAC submit written report evaluating teaching effectiveness and making RPT recommendations with respect to candidate.
- III-D-7, first, sets guidelines for membership, leadership, and meetings of RPT-SAC’s, with flexibility for departments to choose the number and size, within parameters. A department must have at least one, but may have multiple committees for different categories of students—e.g., undergraduate and graduate students. The minimum size of RPT-SACs is three members. The RPT-SAC members elect their chairperson. Details of committee structure are to be included in department’s RPT Statement. Second, are the procedures during an RPT formal review. The department chairperson calls a meeting of the RPT-SAC. RPT-SAC produces a written report on University-approved report form, “evaluat[ing] teaching achievements—using the standards found in the departmental RPT Statement, ... The report shall be based on at least two different forms of evidence regarding teaching.”
- Continues longstanding provision that if RPT-SAC fails to do its work and produce a report despite efforts of department chair, the role of RPT-SAC is “conclusively waived” and is not grounds for complaint by faculty member appealing an adverse decision.
- III-E-6-a requires that the Department RPT Advisory Committee pay heed to the input given by the students through the RPT-SAC, and specifically that the “departmental RPT advisory committee report shall reflect the department’s discussion and consideration of the RPT-SAC report(s). In particular, when concerns are raised in any RPT-SAC report, the department advisory committee report must address these concerns.”

- III-G-1-a eliminates the former provision that made referral to a college-level RPT advisory committee *mandatory* in a case in which termination (i.e., non-retention) of a candidate had been recommended by a departmental SAC. With this change, referral to the college-level committee is mandatory when termination is recommended by the faculty committee of the department, but is optional for the dean, not mandatory, when termination is recommended by the student RPT-SAC.
- III-G-1-d allows a college-level RPT advisory committee to return an RPT case file to a department for appropriate action “if the department advisory committee report or the chairperson’s letter do not follow the requirements of this Policy and the department RPT Statement, including attention to any RPT-SAC report or shared-appointment unit’s recommendation....”.
- III-H-1 *eliminates the former provision that required an RPT case be referred to the University Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee (UPTAC) if the student advisory committee had voted no on an action.* Please note that this former step in the appeals process, along with the related step below involving appeals to the Senate Consolidated Hearing Committee, was among the most serious concerns that prompted this project to revise the methods for student input in RPT.
- III-H-5 eliminates the former provisions that required departmental student SAC members be given notice of the recommendations being made in RPT cases by the senior vice president. With this change, notices of these near-final decisions about RPT made by the senior vice president will continue to be given to the RPT candidates, the department chairpersons, and departmental RPT committee chairpersons, but not directly to the student RPT-SACs who were involved in reviewing the candidate months earlier.
- III-I-2 *eliminates the former provision that gave a department student SAC the right to initiate an appeal to the Senate Consolidated Hearing Committee* if the recommendation of the senior vice president in an RPT case was opposite to the recommendation earlier made by the SAC. This former step in the appeal process, along with the related step above involving appeals to UPTAC, was among the most serious concerns that prompted this project to revise the methods for student input in RPT.