

Rationale and Process for Revising the Regents Policy for *Faculty Tenure*

An important goal of strategic positioning at the University of Minnesota is to focus on recruiting, mentoring, retaining, and rewarding excellent faculty. To address this goal, the Faculty Culture Task Force was asked to make recommendations about existing tenure and promotion policies in light of the University's goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world. Their work took place during the 2005-2006 academic year. The Task Force had a number of specific recommendations for changes to existing policies for tenure and promotion as provided in the Regents Policy on *Faculty Tenure*, last revised in 2001. These included:

1. increasing the rigor of the University-wide criteria for tenure as written in Section 7.11 of the Regents Policy on *Faculty Tenure*. In the last revision of the *Faculty Tenure* policy in 2001, Section 7.11 stated that the basis for being awarded indefinite tenure is "that the achievements of an individual have demonstrated the individual's potential to contribute to contribute significantly to the mission of the University and to its programs of teaching, research, and service over the course of a faculty member's academic career." The Task Force Report described the need for "rigorous standards that facilitate meaningful distinctions," and that provide a set of "clear and consistent expectations."
2. improving tenure and promotion policies to reflect current work-life pressures to improve the University's competitiveness for the most excellent faculty. Other major public and private research universities have made it easier for faculty to achieve tenure and promotion while still maintaining a work-life balance without lowering the rigor of performance standards.
3. addressing more directly the breadth of work in research, teaching, and service that is done at the University including areas of interdisciplinary collaboration, technology transfer, public engagement, and others.

The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost E. Thomas Sullivan transmitted the recommendations of the Faculty Culture Task Force, along with language that they had drafted for a revision of Section 7.11 of the Regents Policy on *Faculty Tenure*, to the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate. This committee is charged by the *Faculty Tenure* policy to originate changes in the policy itself in conjunction with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost and to bring them to the Faculty Senate for discussion with ultimate approval by the Board of Regents.

The Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee met a total of 21 times from September 2006 through March 2007 to discuss the recommended areas for revision in the *Faculty Tenure* policy. Minutes of meetings were available publicly and faculty comment across the University was solicited and considered throughout the process. Ongoing changes were reported to the Faculty Consultative Committee of the Faculty Senate and

discussed. This broad faculty feedback, along with that from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, was brought back to the committee for its continued deliberation.

In addition, the proposed changes in the *Faculty Tenure* policy were brought to the Faculty Senate twice for discussion and this feedback was brought back to the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee. On April 5, 2007, the Faculty Senate approved the proposed changes unanimously by a vote of 108 yes – 0 no. These changes were subsequently brought to the Board of Regents by Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost E. Thomas Sullivan at the May 2007 meeting for review and discussion. On June 7, 2007, the Board of Regents approved these historic changes in the Regents Policy on Faculty Tenure. These changes represent a faculty-driven process to increase the rigor in tenure and promotion standards at the University of Minnesota while increasing the flexibility of the standards to improve work-life balance for faculty.

Revisions to the Regents Policy on *Faculty Tenure* (2007)

The following sections of the policy were changed in response to the strategic positioning efforts:

Section 7.11 General Criteria. This section describes the general criteria for tenure that are applied across the University of Minnesota.

Both the previous Section 7.11 (2001) and the revised Section 7.11 (2007) stress the primary importance of teaching and scholarly research or other creative work. Service to the discipline or to the University is considered but secondary. Both sections require teaching, research, and service to be evaluated.

Previous Section 7.11 (2001)

- stressed faculty potential to contribute to the University's mission of teaching, research, and service

Revised Section 7.11 (2007)

- Candidate has established and is likely to continue to establish a distinguished record of academic achievement.
- Achievement should be the foundation for a national or international reputation or both.
- There must be a qualitative evaluation of the candidate's record.
- The section includes evaluation of interdisciplinary work, public engagement, international activity and initiatives, attention to questions of diversity, and technology transfer where applicable.
- Record shows promise of achieving promotion to professor.

Section 7.12 Departmental Statement. This section describes the departmental or unit criteria for tenure and/or promotion. The section directs each unit to develop its criteria for the department or unit; these individual statements are not part of the document

entitled Regents Policy on *Faculty Tenure*. However, each of the departmental/unit statements does provide the specific criteria by which each faculty member will be evaluated for tenure and/or promotion.

Both the previous Section 7.12 (2001) and the revised Section 7.12 (2007) describe the application of Section 7.11 at the departmental level and require each unit or department to have this set of standards.

Proposed Section 7.12

- This section requires that this statement refer to both Section 7.11 General Criteria [for Tenure] and Section 9.2 Criteria for Promotion to Professor [described below].
- This departmental/unit statement must be voted on by all faculty – tenured and probationary.

Section 9.2 Criteria for Promotion to Professor. This is a new section of the *Faculty Tenure* policy.

- Faculty must have added substantially to a distinguished record of academic achievement.
- Faculty must have established a national or international reputation or both.
- There must be a qualitative evaluation of the candidate's record.
- The section includes evaluation of interdisciplinary work, public engagement, international activity and initiatives, attention to questions of diversity, and technology transfer.
- There is primary emphasis on demonstrated scholarly or other creative achievement and on teaching effectiveness; service alone is not sufficient.

Section 5.5 Exception for New Parent or Caregiver, or for Personal Medical Reasons. This section described the procedure for requesting an extension of the probationary period (which is typically six years).

Both the previous Section 5.5 (2001) and the revised Section 5.5 (2007) permit the extension of the probationary period for birth or adoption of a child or for caregiver responsibilities for one year per individual request. There can be only two extensions for caregiver responsibilities but there is no specified limit on the two other reasons to stop the tenure clock.

Previous Section 5.5 (2001)

- The time window for requesting an extension was three months from the event giving rise to the request.

Revised Section 5.5 (2007)

- The time window for requesting an extension is one year from the event giving rise to the request.
- Extensions can be requested when the faculty member has a serious illness or injury or debilitating condition.

The following revisions were initiated by the Senate Judicial Committee to reflect changes in policy or requests for changes in policy:

Section 1.2 Protection of Faculty.

- Alleged violations of academic freedom can go to the Senate Judicial Committee directly.

Section 13. Judicial Committee.

Section 13.2 Procedures.

- Rewording for clarity regarding the procedures of the Judicial Committee

Section 15. Appeals to Judicial Committee.

- Defines the jurisdiction of the Senate Judicial Committee.

The following were re-wording changes for accuracy of current use:

Section 16.1 Tenure Committee.

- This committee is now called the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee.
- This wording is changed throughout Section 16.

Section 16.4 Additional Functions.

- Changed the section so the Judicial Committee is not mentioned in this section.