Senate ad hoc Committee to Investigate NTS Faculty Issues
Minutes: June 2, 2014

Committee members: Irene Frieze [Psychology, TS faculty], Carey Balaban [Provost’s Office liaison], Stephen Ferber [Office of Human Resources liaison], Don Bialostosky [English, TS], Helen Cahalane [Social Work, NTS], Bill Gentz [Univ Library System, NTS], Sue Skledar [Pharmacy, NTS], Jay Sukits [Business, NTS], Cindy Tananis [Education, NTS], Seth Weinberg [Dental Medicine, TS], Frank Wilson [Greensburg, Sociology, NTS].

All attending.

1. Approval of April 23, 2014 minutes. Minutes were approved and submitted to the Senate office. Note that 3 people have resigned from the committee: Katie Greeno, Marilyn Hravnak and Samuel Tisherman.

2. Announcements. We now have a Box account set up for the Committee. Access this through pitt.app.box.com. Irene tried to make everyone a co-owner. Let her know if you have problems.

3. A Senate Matters column written by Cindy Tananis [with editorial suggestions from the committee] was published in the University Times on May 29. We have gotten positive feedback on the column. The Editor of the University Times, Nancy Brown, wrote that the column was one of best she has published, both in terms of content and writing. We hope to have some additional columns in the next academic year.

4. Discussion of general issues. Jay reported that there have been articles recently in the Wall Street Journal asking about the role of tenure and what it really protects. The argument appeared to be that those with tenure are able to push their views on those who don’t have it. The general consensus of our discussion was that Pitt does well at protecting intellectual freedom. Having longer contracts for NTS faculty helps with this. Perhaps the most vulnerable are the tenure stream faculty who have not yet obtained tenure.

5. Questions were also raised about long-term trends in NTS and TS faculty. Steve volunteered to see what he could find out. Carey noted the Senate Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee routinely provides information about this. Information can be found at http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/FACULTY-COMPOSITION-FINAL-DRAFT-LCR-Report-Faculty%20Composition-2011-2012%2C%20May%202013.pdf.

6. Frank reported on views of the AAUP on NTS faculty. A number of documents were provided and placed on our Box account. As Frank explained, the AAUP refers to full time and part time NTS faculty as “Contingent Faculty.” Their recommendation to avoid difficulties arising from not having tenure is that all Contingent faculty should be made tenure stream. This may relate to the long-term focus of the AAUP on academic freedom. This organization was one of the first to call attention to the growing numbers of faculty not in the tenure stream.

7. Don reported on the Bylaws of the English Department in Arts and Sciences.
   a. Don suggested that our English Department has a very positive climate relating to NTS faculty. They serve in many important positions in the Department, and
have votes at faculty meetings and other committees. For example, they vote on promotion of NTS faculty below their own rank, and serve on search committees for TS faculty. TS also vote on NTS faculty. NTS do not vote on TS faculty promotions.

b. Each unit in A & S has its own bylaws, although they have to be consistent with the bylaws of the school. Departments differ on many issues.

c. All faculty receive an annual letter of evaluation. As Chair of the Department, Don does these letters for all full time TS and NTS faculty. Part-time faculty are reviewed by the Program Director, who has more direct contact with part-time faculty.

d. A question was raised about the Visiting Lecturer position. Visiting positions are NTS and are not considered as part of one’s formal employment at Pitt. Recently, the rule that a person could not be a Visiting faculty member for more than 3 continuous years has started to be enforced by the Office of the Provost. Before that, some people held these positions for many years.

e. As Carey explained, it is not possible in the Provost area schools for someone to be transferred from NTS to TS. To hire for a TS position, it is necessary to advertise the position nationally, and consider all applicants, including any NTS faculty who have held a similar position in the past. As Steve pointed out, this relates to fair employment laws. Also, formal approval for a TS position is more complex than for a Visiting position.

f. Another question was about representation of NTS faculty in policy decisions for the department and in long term planning. Some units have an elected Executive Committee that does some of this work. In the Business School, there is now an official NTS position on the Executive Committee. This is not true in all units.

8. Future meetings.

a. There was general consensus that we need to do more work before we can attempt to present our recommendations again at Faculty Assembly. We probably won’t be ready to do this by the fall.

b. An important issue we still need to discuss is part time faculty.

c. Given the many issues we are still looking at, we agreed to try to schedule a July meeting. A doodle poll request about this will be sent out. One agenda item is the review of Dental Medicine policies.