

**CSU Workshop on Retention, Tenure and Promotion Criteria & Procedures
Friday, February 24, 2006**

Session B - Probationary Plans Discussion

Issue: Need to clearly communicate RTP criteria and expectations

Solution: Probationary Plans

Presenters: Janette Redd Williams, Margaret (Peggy) Atwell, and Michael Suess

Janette introduced herself and gave examples of the probationary plan used at CSU Fresno. She said that the main focus of the plan was to be as clear as possible about all elements of the plan, and that allowances should be made for future amendments and revisions. Surveys have shown that faculty members are satisfied with the probationary plans, but they are still anxious about the probationary process.

Question: Is the probationary plan included in the dossier?

Answer: Yes, plus the last letter from the Provost also goes into the binder.

Janette also mentioned that it is important for the standards to be equal for everyone in the department.

Question: What about the commitment from the university for resources?

Answer: This is at the college or department level, not the university level.

Question: This raises nervousness.

Answer: Expectations need to be reasonable.

Question: There seems to be a vagueness regarding clarity.

Answer: Everyone needs to be clearer.

Peggy introduced herself and used CSU Fullerton as her example of a probationary plan. Fullerton made it clear that the university has expectations and that standards apply equally to everyone. In their first year, faculty members are expected to write a 500-word essay that demonstrates their understanding of the expectations. Nothing more is expected of them in the first year, as they are too busy and overwhelmed with other things. In the second year, faculty members are to submit their personal plans.

Peggy then explained why Fullerton took the time to make changes in the RTP policies.

1. In order to meet the expectations of the university mission statement
2. To make the faculty's first year a positive experience

Peggy then explained what was learned as a result of this change.

1. Anxiety changes the experience of the person and that change is frightening.
2. New faculty members (as well as chairs and mentors) were uncomfortable with high stakes learning.
3. New faculty were confused by multiple sources of information.
4. New faculty saw the RTP process as a great deal of work.
5. Administrators learned not to over-plan.

Question: Can you talk about the standards incorporated into the plan?

Answer: Every campus has it – high quality teaching and research. There is one set of standards for the school as well as departmental guidelines.

Question: This is a two-year process?

Answer: *I missed the answer.*

Question: Does someone with tenure have to follow the plan?

Answer: Yes, but we don't hire already tenured professors at Fullerton.

Question: Do professors get service credit for previous institutions?

Answer: Sometimes – depends upon the campus.

Mike introduced himself and gave examples from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. He wanted to make the distinction that unlike Fresno and Fullerton, SLO is not a commuter campus, but rather, primarily a residential campus. As a result of this, there is a different kind of faculty involvement with the students. SLO subscribes to the teacher/scholar model that professors are to remain current in their discipline (the Carnegie definition). SLO also recognizes that junior faculty will have different interests and approaches than senior faculty.

Mike stated that the RTP process is intimidating to new faculty members. He spoke of the Professional Development Plan and mentioned the human dimension – that junior faculty have mixed experiences with mentors and that the mentors don't always give the best advice. His suggestion for finding the best mentors is to pick people who are happy doing their work and are not medicated in order to make them happy.

Some things that have worked at SLO have been to have junior faculty align their professional goals with the direction of the department (the strategic plans). Faculty should develop something reasonable to accomplish, but rigorous, and this needs to be considered from various levels within the institution. It is helpful to articulate the faculty point of view, and junior faculty should use their comments to develop their professional development for the next year.

All panelists responded to the following questions:

Question: Do development plans continue from associate to full to post tenure?

Answer: No, not at Fresno.

Answer: Yes, at Fullerton.

Answer: Not beyond the award of tenure at SLO.

Question: How can we help mentors to be better?

Answer: Plan to meet with them to help them better understand their roles.

Answer: Rather than workshops, work with the department.

Question: Do mentors continue past the first year for a junior faculty member?

Answer: They are to help junior faculty to write their plans, then the defined relationship ends.

Question: Are mentors appointed or are they volunteers?

Answer: Depends.

Question: How far into the future does the 500-word essay project?

Answer: For the probationary period through tenure.

Question: Does the prospectus become boilerplate?

Answer: Yes.

Answer: Fullerton was going to include a sample, but it was considered too easy to boilerplate.

Question: What is the most contentious thing in the plan?

Answer: We've returned a plan to a faculty member because his narrative said that he valued undergraduate teaching, but didn't want his work to be reviewed externally. The Dean and the Provost said that he needed to redefine his plan if he wanted tenure.

Answer: You need to understand your purpose at the university.

Question: How much do plans change considering a six-year projection?

Answer: There needs to be room for revision.

Question: What happens when there are disagreements between the faculty and the dean?

Answer: Writing plans gets feedback. There has to be an evaluation of the quality of the work. You either make it or you don't. The provost is the final arbiter. Programs are contractual in nature.

Question: Do the contents of the files change?

Answer: One should seriously talk about limiting the number of things going into files.

Question: How are you aligning resources for faculty? Especially if there is never enough money to go to conferences and such, which would add to one's résumé.

Answer: Resources are not always completely funded. There should be an effort to provide at least partial funding. Funds from grants help to supplement costs. There haven't really been any complaints regarding getting money to go to conferences.

Question: How do you deal with cultural differences from department to department?

Answer: Fullerton took two and a half years to move this formula forward. There was a lot of faculty effort and lots of consultation. There needs to be an understanding of the reservations each department – the answers usually refer back to the clarity of the project.

Question: How do we specify teaching goals?

Answer: You're going to have student evaluations in classes every year. Peer reviews need to consistently positive.

Question: Do people meet research obligations early in the process and then just glide in?

Answer: No, people are usually scrambling at the end.

Question: Are student evaluations problematic because teachers can get low evaluations because they are rigorous teachers?

Answer: Faculty still have peer evaluations which can also be soft. Some faculty water down courses in order to get good evaluations.

Answer: Go back to the narrative.

Question: Are plans updated yearly? Must they be?

Answer: No, not in the Fresno model. Most people's plans don't change, but as time goes by, all plans change.

Question: Who's required to do it at SLO?

Answer: All probationary faculty are expected to do it. Resources change - get grants - just present the changes in the plan.

Question: The provost reviews the first year?

Answer: Yes.

Question: If there are delays in getting space, equipment, or changes in the size of the class, do you change the plan?

Answer: Plans are not so specific – they are fairly general. We don't want to focus more on the plan than the work.

Question: Does this process promote short term versus long term projects? Do people say that they won't write the book because it will take too long?

Answer: In some departments you will be encouraged to do articles rather than the book.

Question: Has this improved the quality of your faculty?

Answer: It has improved the process. It has encouraged people to be a part of the community.

Answer: It has improved the academic stature of the university.

END OF DISCUSSION