

University of New England
Provost's Educational Program on the Tenure Process
May 2009

The Provost held the second annual development program for tenured faculty members, deans, program directors, and department chairs in the St. Francis Room of UNE on May 18, 2009. The program was focused on the tenure process at the University of New England, specifically on understanding, communicating, and implementing current policies and procedures. The program was planned in consultation with the University's Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee and included comments from the Provost, Legal Counsel, and Human Resources and used the United Educators *The Goal is Fairness* as a guide.

The program was well attended with over 60 participants. The program began with opening comments from the Associate Provost regarding the importance of following, as well as periodically revising, policies and procedures. Participants were reminded that the purpose of the session was to provide the decision-makers in the process with a time to discuss key issues pertinent to their role. Opportunities for formal and informal discussion are provided to tenure track faculty members in other venues by the colleges. The Provost made comments on how critical tenure and the process of awarding tenure is to higher education and that it is a process that is appreciated in academia, but not well understood generally by the public. He reminded the group that this process is a faculty-driven one and that maintaining a high level of faculty involvement is important to the process.

Representatives of the Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee opened the session with comments regarding their insights. They led a lively discussion on current policies and procedures used at UNE. The participants had prepared for the meeting by reading a case study focused on clear letter writing and the value of candid communication by chairs and tenured professors with candidates early in the tenure process. As the discussion continued, the group decided to forego small group work and stay as a whole for continued discussion. Legal counsel and the human resource director answered questions and made important points throughout the session, as well.

The major topics discussed were:

- It is critical that all parties (RPT, deans, chairs, candidates) know and follow the Faculty Handbook.
- Issues that are identified as problematic in the Faculty Handbook should be addressed by the appropriate committees.
- Confirmation that the portfolio is complete when it leaves the dean's office to go to the committee is essential and perhaps a process for the candidate to review and confirm the status of the portfolio could be adopted.
- Clarity and consistency in communication by those writing letters of evaluation for candidates must be continuously improved.

The group spent a significant amount of time on the last point and agreed that this was a priority for action. Some noted that the case study and letter for the case was useful **, but that having

samples of excellent, clear, consistent letters would be helpful. It was requested that an ad hoc committee be formed to identify, review, and disseminate sample letters to assist letter writers in the next cycle. The Associate Provost agreed to form a small ad hoc committee to complete this task and asked for volunteers from the group.

** Materials from the 2009 workshop will be posted on the Office of the Provost website

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