

Student Affairs Policy Committee
of the
University of Arizona Faculty Senate

April 1989

EVALUATION OF FACULTY HIRING PRACTICES

In the belief that one of the ways students can best be served by the University of Arizona is through effective teaching, the 1988-89 Student Affairs Policy Committee undertook a study of how teaching effectiveness is assessed during faculty hiring practices.

The Committee circulated a questionnaire among 359 faculty members who had been hired within the past three years to determine their perceptions of how teaching was evaluated in the hiring process. The questionnaire was returned by 211 faculty members or roughly 59 percent of those polled.

In addition, the Committee asked 100 deans and department heads to answer a questionnaire concerning the ways that teaching is evaluated in the hiring of faculty members. Fifty-nine answered the questionnaire.

NEW FACULTY

Following are the questions asked of the new faculty, their responses and a brief analysis by the Committee.

1. Was your teaching evaluated in any way during the hiring process that preceded your appointment as a faculty member here at the University of Arizona?

YES -- 69 percent.

NO -- 31 percent.

The Committee finds it significant that 31 percent of the new faculty members perceive that their teaching was not evaluated during the hiring process. Anything short of 100 percent is unsatisfactory to the committee.

2. If the answer to question No. 1 was yes, how were you asked to demonstrate your teaching?

- a. 35 percent said they presented a research colloquium.
- b. 32 percent said they taught a class during their recruitment visit.
- c. 24 percent said they were evaluated by comments in letters from referees.
- d. 20 percent said they provided student evaluation data from previously taught classes at other institutions.

e. 10 percent said they were interviewed about their teaching during their recruitment visit.

f. 6 percent said information from their vitae's was evaluated.

g. 5 percent said syllabus information from courses they had taught were evaluated.

h. 4 percent said telephone calls were placed to referees soliciting information about their teaching.

(NOTE: The percentages total more than 100 percent because some respondents gave more than one answer to the question.)

The Committee questions whether presenting a research colloquium is the best means to evaluate teaching, yet this method was the one most commonly used. In addition, less than a third of the new faculty said they taught a class during their visit, a method the committee believes is the most effective means of evaluating a candidate's teaching ability.

The committee also finds it surprising that only 10 percent of the new faculty indicated that they were interviewed about their teaching during their recruitment visit.

The committee believes that a combination of teaching a class (preferably an undergraduate class), student evaluations, interviews and solicitations from referees should be used to evaluate a candidate's teaching abilities.

3. If the answer to question No. 1 ("Was your teaching evaluated?") was yes, in your perception how much were teaching evaluations weighted in the decision to offer you an appointment?

- a. Strongly -- 12 percent.
- b. Moderately -- 41 percent.
- c. Slightly -- 37 percent.
- d. Not at all -- 2 percent.
- e. Don't know -- 8 percent.

There are two ways to evaluate this data -- by looking at these percentages by themselves and by including data from the first question.

The committee notes that in the above data more than three-fourths of the new faculty perceive that teaching is only moderately or slightly weighted in the decision to hire them. Certainly, the committee would have felt more comfortable with a much higher percentage in the "strongly" category.

But if we include in this evaluation those respondents who said in answer to question No. 1 that their teaching was not evaluated at all, the percentages take on a whole different look. The new percentages would be as follows:

- a. Strongly -- 9 percent.

- b. Moderately -- 30 percent.
- c. Slightly -- 26 percent.
- d. Not at all -- 35 percent.

The new percentages show that more than half of those who responded to the survey perceive that little or no attention was paid to teaching competence when they were being considered for appointment to the faculty. We would have hoped that the highest category would have been strongly, rather than not at all.

If, in addition, we were to make any assumptions about the 41 percent who did not respond to the survey, it would not increase our estimate of the extent to which teaching was evaluated.

The Committee finds that far too many new faculty members perceive that little or no attention was paid to their teaching abilities when they were being considered for a faculty position.

DEANS AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Following are the questions asked of deans and department heads, the results of their responses and the Committee's analysis:

1. Do teaching evaluations figure in short lists of candidates?

- YES -- 77 percent.
- NO -- 23 percent.

The Committee finds it alarming that almost a quarter of the deans and department heads fail to consider teaching ability when hiring a faculty member. We would have hoped that the figure would be nearer to 100 percent.

2. In the process of making decisions on candidates, how do the candidates present themselves on campus?

- a. Present a colloquium -- 93 percent.
- b. Teach a class -- 30 percent.
- c. Other -- 9 percent.

Again, the Committee finds that presenting a colloquium falls short of determining whether a candidate is a good teacher and that more candidates should be required to teach a class, preferably to undergraduates.

3. Are students involved in the faculty selection process? (Percentage of departments using students in the evaluation process.)

- a. Search committees.
 - Graduate representatives -- 25 percent.

Undergraduate representatives -- 5 percent.

b. Interview

Graduate representatives -- 55 percent.

Undergraduate representatives -- 20 percent.

c. Evaluation of presentations.

Graduate representatives -- 68 percent.

Undergraduate representatives -- 30 percent.

It is obvious from the above data that deans and department heads give more credence to the evaluations of graduate students than undergraduates, since graduates are more widely represented in the faculty selection process. The data seem to indicate that undergraduate participation, small as it is, is basically limited to classroom presentations.

4. Please explain how teaching competence is determined.

a. Research colloquium -- 88 percent.

b. Letters of reference -- 45 percent.

c. Student evaluations of prior courses -- 32 percent.

d. Interviews -- 23 percent.

e. Observation of lectures -- 14 percent.

f. Telephone calls to referees -- 11 percent.

g. Vitae information -- 9 percent.

h. Inspection of course syllabi -- 2 percent.

(NOTE: The percentages total more than 100 percent because some deans and department heads indicated more than one method of evaluating teaching competence.)

It is clear to the Committee that deans and department heads consider research colloquia valuable vehicles for evaluating teaching. Interestingly, if these percentages are compared with those derived from the responses of new faculty, it is obvious that a high percentage of faculty candidates were unaware that they were being evaluated for teaching during their research presentations.

In addition, nearly half of the deans and department heads gave significant consideration to letters of reference while interviews and observations of lectures were not valued highly. A combination of these methods would be more desirable to more effectively evaluate a candidate's teaching.

5. Please explain how a new faculty member's teaching load is determined.

a. Standard departmental load -- 41 percent.

b. Negotiation -- 30 percent.

c. Reduced load for new hires -- 21 percent.

d. Position announcement -- 5 percent.

e. By department head -- 3 percent.

In light of the Committee's proposal approved last year by the Faculty Senate to allow faculty members to negotiate their teaching load and how their merit pay increases may be weighted, the percentage of deans and department heads that allow negotiations over teaching loads is encouraging.

6. Is there a written policy available indicating the weight given to merit pay and promotion and tenure decisions in relation to teaching performance?

- a. 57 percent said they had a written policy.
- b. 43 percent said they had no written policy.

The Committee finds it significant that slightly less than half of the departments have no written policy to tell new faculty members what is expected of them when it comes to earning merit pay increases and promotion and tenure. We would have thought that more departments would have such a policy.

7. Is there a subcommittee of the faculty that recommends candidates to you?

- a. YES -- 84 percent.
- b. NO -- 16 percent.

The affirmative response is encouraging. Faculty hirings should not be left to the sole consideration of the dean or department head.

CONCLUSION

The results of the committee's survey of new faculty members and deans and department heads clearly indicates that too little attention is paid to teaching when candidates are considered for faculty appointments at the University of Arizona.

The Committee recognizes that the University is a major research institution and that emphasis must be placed on research capabilities of prospective faculty members. But it also believes that equal treatment of its undergraduate program is vital if the university is to place itself among the foremost universities in the nation.

This is not to say that undergraduates fail to receive a strong education; but by paying greater attention to the teaching quality of the faculty, the university can achieve its goals of producing outstanding research and high quality graduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To help achieve these goals, the committee offers the following recommendations:

1. That deans and department heads give at least equal consideration in hiring to teaching skills and research potential.

2. That more emphasis be placed on a combination of classroom lectures, interviews, calls to referees and student evaluations to assess teaching effectiveness.

3. That department heads and deans set out to change the perception held by too many of the new faculty that teaching is not given as much consideration as research.

4. That undergraduates be given a stronger voice in the selection of faculty members by means of more appointments to search committees, by being involved in interviews and through evaluations of classroom lectures. (Interestingly, this recommendation comes at a time when students may be given a vote on the governing body of the university, the Board of Regents, through their Student Regent.)

5. That all departments be required to prepare and put into effect a written policy to tell faculty members what is expected of them to achieve merit pay raises and promotion and tenure.

Good communication among deans, department heads and faculty members is vital to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to indifference, poor morale, a lack of unity and poor performance in the classroom and the research laboratory.

If the University of Arizona is to achieve its goal of greatness, it must pay close attention to all phases of its endeavors. Certainly, the quality of its undergraduate programs can be improved if greater attention is paid to the teaching abilities of those it hires.

James W. Johnson, Chair
Rosalind Andreas
Terry A. Badger
Charles Brainerd
Frances L. Chen
Theresa Enos
Bruce Lerner
Randy Papetti
Donna Swaim
Robert L. Wrenn

VISION STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2002

The University of Arizona in Tucson, a Land Grant, Research I institution that ranks among the top ten public universities in the country, offers the highest quality education to the people it serves, equipping them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes of mind that are the foundation of a lifetime commitment to learning, personal development and social responsibilities. It offers a caring and attractive environment for a diverse community of students, faculty and other employees in which their many contributions are highly recognized and valued. Faculty members are engaged in the aggregation, interpretation, dissemination and application of existing knowledge and in the quest for new knowledge. The University's instruction and curricula bridge theory and practice, helping students to learn from both in an environment where teaching and research are synergistically related. A concern for issues and ideas transcending state, national and disciplinary borders is prominent among the interests of students and the faculty. The University exercises national and international leadership in advancing the frontiers of knowledge and creativity, and its land grant mission flourishes by assisting the state in the framing and implementation of social policy and strategies for economic development. It is recognized for a special focus on the need of Mexico, Latin America, arid lands and the Pacific Rim in addition to its traditional international involvement. The University has developed an environment that supports partnerships across government, industry and universities so as to extend the social impacts historically achieved in medicine, agriculture and the life sciences as well as in the arts, humanities, science and the professions.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

HONORARY DEGREES: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

POLICY

The University of Arizona awards honorary degrees in order to recognize significant achievements within the academic environment and in the world at large. These degrees provide the University with an opportunity to honor individuals for their contribution to the University of Arizona, the state, the nation, or the world.

Approved honorary degrees for the University of Arizona are Doctor of Fine Arts, Doctor of Humane Letters, Doctor of Humanities, Doctor of Laws, Doctor of Letters, Doctor of Music, and Doctor of Science.

A candidate for an honorary degree may be suggested by anyone but must be formally nominated by an organized faculty within the University, usually an academic department or Faculty of a college. A Faculty Advisory Committee on Honorary Degrees reviews all nominations and makes recommendations to the President. Approval by the Faculty Senate is required for honorary as well as earned degrees. Normally, no more than one nomination from a single College or Faculty will be approved in any one year. When exceptions are made, the candidates should represent different subject areas.

Only in exceptional cases will the University confer an honorary degree in absentia.

PROCEDURES

When nominating a candidate the originating faculty unit will provide its dean with a curriculum vitae and a brief biographical sketch (maximum 500 words) which clearly points out why the individual should be awarded an honorary degree. It is important that these statements emphasize the significance of a nominee's career rather than repeat, in text format, the details of the curriculum vitae.

The deans will forward to the President all nominations received, together with their own comments.

The President will forward all nominations to the Advisory Committee. After receiving the advice of the Committee, the President will select those candidates whose nominations are to proceed and will forward each name to the appropriate dean for a vote by members of the General Faculty at a regular or a special meeting of the College or Faculty unit.

For each College- or Faculty-approved nominee, a one-page biographical sketch will be prepared by the appropriate dean and sent to the Faculty Center. The biographical sketch will be made available to Faculty Senate members at least five days prior to the March Faculty Senate meeting where the appropriate dean will present the nominations to the Senate for Executive Session action. Only candidates supported by both a College/Faculty and by the Faculty Senate will be forwarded by the President for approval of the Board of Regents.

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee on Honorary Degrees will have seven members, including the Secretary of the Faculty, a Dean, and five senior faculty members. The President will appoint the committee and may request the advice of the Committee on Committees. The Secretary of the Faculty will serve as chairperson. All other members will serve staggered three-year terms. The committee is charged with the following responsibilities:

- A. Identifying qualified candidates and recommending them to the President, so that the President might consider suggesting them to academic units for consideration as nominees;
- B. Reviewing all nominations forwarded by the President; and
- C. Advising the President on the merits of the various nominees with a view to ensuring high quality candidates, appropriate degrees, and diversity in fields of accomplishment.

SCHEDULE

Honorary degrees are conferred at Spring Commencement, Winter Commencement, academic convocations and other important occasions at various times in the year. Given the variety of dates involved, it is not practical to establish separate schedules for considering candidates for each individual occasion. Candidates will usually be considered in a single group each year. Under normal circumstances, the honorary degree nomination and approval schedule will be as follows:

September 1	President calls for nominations
October 15	Departmental nominations to Deans
November 1	Nominations and Deans' comments to President
November 10	President refers nominations to the Advisory Committee
December 20	Advisory Committee recommendations to President
Jan. 15-Feb. 15	College votes on selected candidate(s)
March 1-7	Faculty Senate (Executive Session) votes on candidates
March	Board of Regents approval requested

Approved by the Faculty Senate, April 3, 1989