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FOREWORD

The *Faculty Handbook* provides selective information about The University of Southern Mississippi for prospective and current members of the academic staff. Although the *Faculty Handbook* is not a comprehensive, self-contained policy document, nor is it a contract of employment, it does provide guidance for the relationships between the University and the faculty. The University of Southern Mississippi retains the right to alter, revoke, or amend any provisions of the *Faculty Handbook*. Neither this handbook nor any supplements thereto replace, amend, abridge, or anticipate federal or state law, or the *Policies and Bylaws* of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning.

This edition of the *Faculty Handbook* repeals and supersedes all previous editions. Copies of the *Faculty Handbook* and all supplements thereto are available on the University web page at www.usm.edu and in the offices of the University President, the vice presidents, the college deans, and the department chairs. The copy retained by the Office of the Provost is designated as the **official** *Faculty Handbook*. Amendments or revisions to the handbook will be disseminated to faculty and posted on the University web page. Other printed information applicable to the academic staff of the University such as accounts of employment benefits, optional insurance plans, and state retirement policies, is available in the University Department of Human Resources.

There is a standing Faculty Handbook Committee composed of an Assistant or Associate Provost, an Assistant or Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development, a dean selected by the college deans, a department chair selected by the Council of Chairs, a member and a non-member of the Faculty Senate appointed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, and a member of the faculty appointed by the President. The University Counsel serves as a nonvoting member. The charge of the standing committee is to review the *Faculty Handbook*, to consider proposed amendments submitted by faculty or administration, and to recommend to the President revisions, modifications, and amendments to the *Faculty Handbook*. Suggestions for the improvement of the *Faculty Handbook* may be directed to the Office of the Provost, to any member of the Faculty Handbook Committee, or to any member of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate.

PROPOSED
ADDITION.
(see next page)

FOREWORD - The Faculty Handbook Committee considers whether proposed changes to the Handbook are in the best interest of the faculty and the university as a whole. To the extent possible, the Committee's deliberations and decisions are informed by reaction and input from relevant constituencies. If approved by the Faculty Handbook Committee, changes are formally recommended to the University President for a final decision.

- (a) established within the parameters of University evaluation criteria and procedures;
- (b) approved by all responsible University administrative officers;
- (c) written;
- (d) disseminated among the staff of the academic unit; and
- (e) followed in all evaluation proceedings.

Unitary criteria and procedures shall be used as standards for conducting annual evaluations, pre-tenure reviews, and promotion and tenure deliberations.

8.2.5 Basis of the Process. The process through which personnel advice is given to the University President is grounded on the belief that the faculties comprising the University's academic departments are best qualified to determine their own composition and to judge the professional conduct, accomplishments, and promise of the individuals within each department. Hence, department chairs and faculty bodies within the department conduct faculty evaluations and make recommendations for academic appointments, compensation, promotion, and tenure. These same procedures apply not only to academic departments, but also to other academic units organized as schools or divisions rather than departments, such as the Gulf Park Campus. In such cases, the directors of the academic units have concurrent authority and responsibility to review all written unitary peer evaluations and personnel recommendations, prepare their own evaluations and recommendations, and transmit them to the department chair.

The academic departments, however, are but components of the several colleges and campuses of the University, each having specific goals and objectives. The University pursues a much broader educational mission than its constituent units. Hence, the constituent colleges of the University maintain college advisory committees that review personnel recommendations of their academic departments. Advised by these committees, college deans make personnel recommendations to the Provost. The Provost, in turn, maintains a University Advisory Committee, composed of the chairs of the college advisory committees, that reviews decanal personnel recommendations.

Thus, personnel reviews, pre-tenure reviews, and recommendations prepared at the departmental level of the University are subject to review by all higher levels of institutional administration, and these reviews afford due process, including recourse, in the event that faculty members elect to dispute the opinions of reviewing committees and institutional officers. The procedures applicable to performance reviews and pre-tenure reviews, however, differ from those applicable to recommendations for promotion in rank and the award of tenure.

Action: Delete all.

Rationale: all is not accurate, for example
pre-tenure reviews are not evaluated
by The University Advisory Committee.

Faculty Evaluation Procedures—Ch. 8

Annual performance reviews and pre-tenure reviews are evaluative instruments that inform faculty of their professional progress and seek to inspire improvement and faculty development. They are not institutional recommendations for personnel actions and thus may not be appealed to the Board of Trustees. Annual performance reviews and pre-tenure reviews, however, are precursors of future recommendations for personnel actions, and faculty are therefore afforded recourse through the Faculty Grievance Proceedings set forth in Chapter 12.

8.2.6 Duties of Department Chairs. Departmental chairs, acting as administrative officers, provide the academic deans with written advice on all departmental hiring recommendations, annual performance reviews, pre-tenure reviews, promotion recommendations, and tenure deliberations.

Already deleted

8.2.7 Required Department Personnel Entities. ~~Academic departments may organize and convene a departmental personnel authority to advise the department chair with annual performance reviews.~~ Academic departments *must* organize and convene the departmental personnel committee for pre-tenure reviews, promotion recommendations, and tenure deliberations. *A quorum must be present at these deliberations (see Section 8.2.9).*

Face-to-face discussions of

8.2.8 Confidentiality of Proceedings. The deliberations, records, and recommendations of departmental chairs and departmental entities formed for the purposes of hiring, evaluating, reviewing, and recommending personnel actions are strictly confidential. The disclosure of such information is permissible only for use by the appropriate authorities and then only for use in:

See revision

- (a) administrative reviews;
- (b) annual performance reviews;
- (c) pre-tenure review, promotion and tenure deliberations;
- (d) faculty appeals;
- (e) review by the Board of Trustees; or
- (f) complying with applicable law or pursuant to a court order.

Neither the Board of Trustees nor the University accepts responsibility for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information by University employees.

8.2.9 Procedural Rules. All University advisory bodies ~~are encouraged to~~ ^{must} adopt procedural rules for the conduct of their deliberations consistent with the provisions of this *Faculty Handbook*. In adopting those rules, the following definitions will apply:

Proxy is defined as authority, conferred in writing by a qualified voter to another qualified voter, empowering the latter to vote on behalf of the former in one or more specified matters. *Proxy is*

8.2.8 Confidentiality of Proceedings. The deliberations, records, and recommendations of departmental chairs and departmental entities formed for the purposes of hiring, evaluating, reviewing, and recommending personnel actions regarding academic staff (faculty and non-faculty academic staff - see Section 3.4) are strictly confidential, with access limited only to academic staff involved directly in the proceedings. The disclosure of such information is permissible only for use by the proper academic authorities and then only for use in:

(a) etc.

9.6.4 Required Probationary Period. The Board of Trustees establishes general guidelines pertaining to the probationary period that faculty must serve before being eligible for academic tenure:

Beginning with appointment to any professorial rank, a faculty member may be recommended for tenure after completing a probationary period of five to seven academic years, three of which may have been met in the rank of instructor. Upon written agreement between the institution and the faculty member, credit up to a maximum of ~~four~~ ^{five} (5) years toward fulfillment of the minimum probationary period may be allowed for service at one or more other institutions of higher learning.

Such credit toward the probationary period transferred from another institution must be determined at the time of initial appointment to rank. Such allowance is to be granted only to an individual who possesses exceptional professional qualifications and achievements and is not to be construed as exempting said individual from any other institutional policies and procedures governing the awarding of tenure.

Once the probationary period has been successfully completed, a professor of any rank, if reappointed, may be awarded tenure. For tenure to be awarded, the Institutional Executive Officer must make a recommendation to the Board in writing. Only faculty members of professorial rank can be awarded tenure. The award of tenure is not vested until notice of the award is given in writing by the Institutional Executive Officer, after approval of the Board, and the written notice is actually received by the faculty member.

Faculty members who transfer from one institution to another within the Mississippi system are subject to the same probationary period in a given institution as any other faculty member who is new to the system.¹

If a faculty member is to be recommended for the privilege of tenure, the recommendation normally will be made during an eligible faculty member's sixth (6th) year of full-time employment with the University. If tenure is not granted during the sixth (6th) year of full-time employment, the faculty member generally will be given a terminal contract for their seventh (7th) year of full-time employment. If recommended for tenure by the President and approved by the Board of Trustees, an award of tenure takes effect at the beginning of the seventh (7th) contract year. Under no circumstances may an award of tenure become effective without approval of the Board, expressed in its minutes, and written notification of the award is received from the President.

¹ Board Policies and Bylaws, Sections 403.0101.

add { Generally this credit is limited to two (2) years for those appointed at the rank of assistant professor, three (3) years for ⁸⁵ those appointed at the rank of associate professor, and five (5) years for those appointed at the rank of professor.

Promotion and Award of Tenure—Ch. 9

9.6.5 Credit for Leaves of Absence. Contingent upon prior approval by the University President, time accruing during educational, professional, and sabbatical leaves may be applied to satisfy the probationary period.

9.6.6 Deferral. At the request of a candidate and upon the advice of a candidate's department chair, college dean, and the Provost, the President may defer the tenure recommendation to the seventh (7th) year of employment or later.

9.6.7 Credit for Prior Accomplishment. In accordance with Board guidelines, the probationary period may be satisfied in part by prior professional experience and/or employment within another institution of higher learning. Such credit is not routinely awarded and must be consistent with Board and University tenure requirements. ^{Generally} The credit is limited to two (2) years for those appointed at the rank of assistant professor, three (3) years for those appointed at the rank of associate professor, and ^{five} ~~four~~ years for those appointed at the rank of professor.

Tenure may not be granted before a candidate has held Tenure Track appointment at the University for at least one (1) full calendar year, during which the candidate is employed as a member or ex officio member of the Corps of Instruction and performing instructional or research duties on a campus of the University.

However, a ^{ordinarily} At the time of initial employment by the Board, ^{a faculty member or} an administrative employee whose prior employment included faculty rank ^{at the level of assistant, associate, or full professor} and tenure may be granted tenure only if so recommended by ~~the department, the Dean, the Provost, and the President~~ and approved by the Board.¹ *It is expected that prior to making this recommendation the President will seek input from the department, the Dean, and the Provost.*

9.6.8 Standard of Evaluation for Tenure. The award of academic tenure is a privilege. Tenure is awarded after a thorough review that culminates in the University acknowledging the faculty member's professional excellence and the likelihood that excellence will contribute substantially over a considerable period of time to the mission and anticipated needs of the University. Professional excellence is reflected in the faculty member's teaching, research, and service, including the faculty member's ability to interact appropriately with colleagues and students. A faculty member might meet the criteria for a given promotion in rank, and achieve promotion, but fail to merit the privilege of tenure. Promotion in academic rank does not necessarily imply that one merits academic tenure.

9.7 TENURE PROCEEDINGS

9.7.1 Types of Tenure Proceedings. Departmental Personnel Committees conduct two (2) proceedings relating to academic tenure: pre-tenure review and tenure award deliberations. In order to broaden faculty participation in all tenure proceedings, the membership of the Departmental Personnel Committee shall be expanded to include all tenured faculty members within the department. Only tenured faculty members may participate in tenure proceedings.

¹ Board Policies and Bylaws, Section 403.0101.