Evaluation, Merit, Rewards, and Workload Committee Report - Nov 8, 2012
HOP 2.11 Annual Faculty Performance Evaluations

BACKGROUND

During the Fall and early Spring semesters of the 2011-2012 academic year, the EMRW committee worked extensively on providing feedback to the Senate and the Provost concerning a "white paper" on the annual evaluations procedures. A report was made to the Senate in February, 2012. At the same meeting, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, Carola Wenk, asked the EMRW committee to work on revisions of HOP 2.11 on annual evaluations in light of the new Regent's Rule 31102. Simultaneously, the CAFT committee was asked to work on revising HOP 2.22 Comprehensive Periodic Evaluation. Following the committees' work during the spring semester, the chairs of the committees, Mary Kay Houston Vega (EMRW), and Rebekah Smith (CAFT), individually met several times with Jesse Zapata (Vice-Provost for Downtown campus and Academic and Faculty Support) to discuss issues of concern about the respective policies.

In July, Drs. Houston Vega and Smith met with Dr. Zapata to discuss aligning our HOP 2.11 with the model policy now posted with Regent's Rule 31102. In addition, related points of concern raised by the EMRW committee were discussed and revisions made to address these concerns. Addition work on revisions took place via email. Thanks to the contributions of the committee, this resulted in a fairly complete policy, with the exception of determining how the individual area evaluations (research, teaching, and service) would combine to determine an overall evaluation. Another remaining issue was whether a single annual review of unsatisfactory could trigger a faculty development plan.

In August and early September, Dr. Smith represented the Senate (until new committees and committee chairs were determined) in meetings with Drs. Zapata and Frederick to finalize revisions to the annual review policy. In a final meeting on September 24, the FDP trigger was removed from the policy. The resulting version of the policy was sent to stakeholders with deadline of Dec 3. Faculty forums were held on Oct 31 and Nov 1. Dr. Smith worked with EMRW committee to draft this report for the Nov 8, 2012 meeting of the faculty Senate.

Report on Stakeholder Feedback and Corresponding Recommendations

This report is divided into four sections: I. Primary issues of concern discussed in Faculty Forum. II. Additional comments received via email, during forums, or by committee members. III. Concerns noted in EMRW report (Feb 2012) on White Paper that are relevant to this policy. IV. EMRW recommended changes to white paper that are applicable to this policy.

I.   Primary issues raised in forums.

        A.   Workload agreements. While workload agreements are taken into consideration in the annual review process, this policy does not address the workload agreements per se. Each college is supposed to have a workload policy and chairs should be meeting with faculty each fall to discuss their workload agreement. During the forums, it emerged that this was not the case.

SUGGESTION: The confusion regarding workload policy needs to be addressed in some way. This policy is not the appropriate outlet, but the discussion in the forums indicates that a formal policy or guideline may be needed. These would not replace the college level guidelines, instead the University guidelines should specify that colleges develop and publish guidelines, should specify the period covered by agreements, and frequency with which these are reviewed (e.g., agreements are projections for upcoming three year period, but are reviewed annually between faculty and chair).

        B.   Peer Review. (see also comments received via email, Section II)

        1.   Faculty in departments who currently do not conduct peer review expressed concern about this process (e.g., it would disrupt cordiality, it would be time consuming; that in small departments the rotation schedule would have individuals serving frequently; that faculty would be biased in their own favor).
NOTE: As pointed out in the Forums that the peer review component is not a new edition to the annual review policy and is included in the currently published HOP policy.

        2.   Concern that departments that currently use peer review would have to change the way they select the committee.
NOTE: Also discussed in forums that, other than the requirement to rotate, the way in which the peer review process occurs, including the composition of the committee, is left to department guidelines.

        3.   Some faculty commented positively about the experience of serving on peer review committees for annual evaluations as it made them aware of the work of their colleagues.

        4.   Some faculty commented positively about peer review because it served as a balance for potentially biased chair evaluations of faculty.

        5.   Peer-review is consistent with goals of shared governance.

        SUGGESTION: Continue to include peer review in the policy, but Senate should monitor the process (for instance, through the grievance process which is already monitored) and revisit this issue as needed.

C.   Categorical scale rather than continuous scale. Faculty suggested that a range of scores would more accurately reflect range of performance within each category. Also suggested that set cut points be established in policy as opposed to being recommended by committee

    1.   Committee reviewed a variety of cut point options and recommends the options shown in revised Table 1. Committee recommends that the minimum value in each category serve as the minimum value of the overall score required to achieve that category of overall evaluation.

SUGGESTION: Allow a range of scores for each category and set minimum values as indicated in revisions to Table 1.

II.   **Additional feedback via email, in forums, or in committee discussions.**

A.   Peer Review: members of faculty review committee will give other faculty low ratings in order to benefit themselves.

    1.   Guidelines should have sufficient clarity to avoid possibility of arbitrary rating assignments.

    2.   Chair and dean will review and can correct for inappropriate ratings.

    3.   Committee members rotate.

    4.   Members of a department review committee who do not perform this duty in a thorough and unbiased fashion should see this reflected negatively in their own evaluation in area of service in the following review cycle.

B.   In forums, following question was asked: Do our aspirant institutions use peer review for annual evaluations?

    1.   Arizona State University, The University of Colorado at Boulder, and The University of Texas at Austin all specify department peer review committee. The policies of the other institutions are mixed: some do not, one makes this optional, some policies are not entirely clear on this issue.

C.   Development of Guidelines: faculty members will set guidelines to benefit themselves at expense of other faculty.

    1.   Faculty will work together to establish guidelines.

    2.   Chairs and deans have responsibility to review guidelines and to send back to faculty for revisions to correct for such instances.

    3.   Guidelines should not be approved by Dean unless they are equitable for all department faculty.

D.   Development of Consensus: faculty will not be able to achieve a consensus.

       1.   If faculty are unable to come to consensus, then chair and/or dean can appointment faculty member from outside the department to mediate.

       2.   Alternatively, chair and/or dean can mediate in development of the guidelines.

       3.   If mediation fails and faculty still cannot achieve consensus, the chair and/or dean will finalize guidelines.

E.   From section IX. A: "…departments must continually benchmark against neighboring disciplines …"

       1.   QUESTION AND COMMENT: What exactly are "neighboring disciplines"? This term seems overly vague and not necessarily appropriate term for this use.

       2.   If departments must continually "benchmark against neighboring disciplines within the university and with similar programs at aspirant institutions," then is it the burden of the department to define 1] who and what a "department" IS in order to 2] define these "similar" programs and "aspirant" institutions.

       SUGGESTED REVISION: However, departmental assessments of faculty potential must not be only introspective. Department guidelines should outline goals and/ or identify aspirant departments for the purpose of moving forward. As with other aspects of department guidelines, identification of goals and/or potential aspirant departments should occur through department consensus.

F.   COMMENT: "Well, frankly, I like a system where I can establish my own standards and criteria for merit and then evaluate my colleagues according to those standards & criteria, and assign ratings for all categories that the department chair may "tweak"."

       1.   *Individuals do not set criteria*

       2.   *Committee, not an individual, does evaluation*

       3.   *Chair has limits and must justify changes, but this can serve to balance effects of committee giving unjustified evaluations*

G.   "A low in a single category (teaching research or service) over one year that results in a remediation is too stiff and not consistent with how faculty produce work (longer than a year). One area may in fact become judged as unsatisfactory year over year because a faculty with a heavy load in one area may cause reduction in another area. This should be changed to being low in two consecutive years in one category before remediation."

1.   The policy does not call for remediation. Support is not the same as remediation. NOTE: An important aspect of the revision process was that FDP was removed from the annual review policy. Inclusion of support is not punitive and in fact helps the faculty member. This is also encouraged in the SYSFAC model policy because it benefits the faculty member. This also makes the University for providing the assistance necessary for improvement.

H.   Related to the previous point, department guidelines can continue to allow for averaging, etc. over more than one year for the purposes of merit.

1.   Faculty suggested that there should be uniformity across departments in a college

2.   The categories of "fails to meet" and "unsatisfactory" by definition indicate a lack of adequate performance that outside the bounds of possible year to year variance and therefore multiple years should be considered.

3.   The following suggestion for wording change addresses the request for uniformity across departments, as well as the issue of year to year variance. This wording is modified wording from the relevant policy at Arizona State University, one of our aspirant institutions. Central Florida and Colorado also allow for consideration of more than one year.

SUGGESTION FOR SECTION IX.D: "Because many research projects take time for full development and because an individual faculty member's strongest years may not coincide with years in which merit raises are available, a maximum period of 36 months may be considered, but the emphasis should be on the most recent year."

I.   Language definition... there is difference between "workload" and "effort" as used in the document. "Workload" means something entirely different than faculty "efforts" in teaching, research, and service. This needs to be consistent. We should stop calling this "workload." Also the term, "expectations," is used throughout the document in many different ways. "Expectations" needs to be part of the "Definitions" section and then used consistently with this definition. Are "expectations" merely effort percentages or is the definition of "expectations" broader and/or more inclusive?
NOTE: Some departments and colleges use "workload agreement" and some "effort distribution". Use of the term expectations is different in different context, but not clear from this comment what is confusing or what needs changing.

J.   While the entire procedure is outlined in text form, it is suggested that a simple table format of the sequence would be clearer.
SUGGESTION: A table has been added under IX.Q.

K.   Possibility of workload adjustments during year.

        1.   Departments must ensure that annual evaluations are based on the expectations of effort distribution established by the faculty member and department chair. Typically this effort distribution will be established in the fall preceding the year of review. However, there may be cases in which effort distribution requires adjustment during the year under review and these adjustments should also be taken into consideration.

L.   Rating versus ranking.

        1.   Annual review process is one of ratings based upon established guidelines. This policy is not one for ranking performance of individuals

        SUGGESTION: wording change in Section II to address this.

M.   Annual review while on FMLA leave needs to be a clear university policy, established by the university, not a department chair.

        1.   A revision has been suggested.

N.   A Dean of Chair making a change limited to .25 of the Department review committee is a good one but a change that causes one to fall into a different category or a "no merit" situation may be possible with less than .25 change.   A written explanation should be required for ANY change in category resulting from a change in score by Chair or Dean.

        1.   This comment will no longer be relevant if, as committee recommends based upon faculty feedback, the policy establishes minimum scores required for each category.

        2.   If the policy is not changed to include minimum scores and continues to include the department committee and chair's roles in establishing the cut points, then would recommend adding the following wording to section IX. G. 3: If the chair's established minimums vary by 0.25 or less from those recommended by the committee, but the new minimums cause one or more faculty members to be ineligible for merit when they would have been eligible according to the committee's recommendation, the chair will provide a report to the dean and the committee outlining the basis for the variance.

O.   Objection to disqualification for merit due to one category of unsatisfactory… should not be penalized for one year of low performance or variability in normal research cycles.

     1.   Guidelines should be written so that "Low" performance is not unsatisfactory performance. Classifying variability associated with normal research productivity cycles as "unsatisfactory" would contradict the purpose of annual review and would contradict the definitions in SYSFAC's model policy. Low performance might result in "fails" in one category (depending upon guidelines), but that would not prevent merit.

     2.   Unsatisfactory is not an "off" year, but indicates that individual is neglecting duties. Guidelines should be written to reflect this and this category should not be applied in cases of an "off" year.

     3.   Should someone be able to neglect one area and still receive merit? This does not seem fair to the other people in the department who will have to compensate for this. When someone is unsatisfactory, usually someone else (other faculty, department as whole, or students) pays the price.

P.   Suggestion that only preclude merit when unsatisfactory rating occurs for category with non-trivial effort. Three possibilities suggested:

     a)   disqualification for merit occurs only if effort in unsatisfactory area is at least 10%
     b)   only if unsatisfactory in two categories with combined effort greater than 20%
     c)   Only if unsatisfactory in area with nontrivial effort (% not specified)

     1.   Alternative opinion: If a percentage is not specified (options c) or only if effort is greater than 20% (option b) than this raises the problems noted in previous point regarding awarding merit in a way that might be unfair to other faculty. 10% effort (options 1) still seems high for an area to be dismissed given that this is equivalent to a % effort for one course.

     2.   Examination of policies at aspirant institutions did produce one instance (University of Central Florida) in which a minimum percentage of effort is required before merit is precluded. In this case the minimum effort is 5%. This is suggested as a compromise as it provides a balance between being unfairly penalized for an area with trivial effort and being unsatisfactory to an extent that is detrimental to the faculty, department, or students.

SUGGESTION: Recommend minimum level of effort to category that could lead to disqualification for merit be set at 5%. Wording change can be found in Section IX.P.1

Q.   Suggestion that need additional wording for FMLA.

1.   Wording change in Section IX.D.3.a.iv

III.   Concerns noted in EMRW report (Feb 2012) on White Paper that are relevant to this policy.

A.   Faculty Development Plan. Committee concern: The EMRW Committee opposed implementing the "Voluntary Faculty Development Plan" or similar policy on an annual basis. It was recommended that the Voluntary Faculty Development Plan be omitted from the Whitepaper. The committee suggested revisions to emphasize that there would be no recourse for electing or not electing to implement a FDP, not implementing FDP recommendations or completing them according to the established time-line. Furthermore, the committee recommends that the document should be consistent with evolving UT System Board of Regents Rules and Regulations. *Status of concern: there is no longer a voluntary FDP. Instead wording has been revised to encourage support when needed without a formalized monitoring plan apart from the annual evaluations. An FDP cannot be triggered directly from the annual review process.*

B.   Best Practices for Annual Evaluation Reports. The committee recognized the challenge of creating one generic annual performance evaluation model and guidelines given a limited time-frame in which to respond to the white paper. Given the differences across and within departments, the committee confirmed the need to identify annual evaluation report best practices specific to various disciplines and departments. Thus, the committee will continue reviewing department annual evaluation guidelines to identify best practices for annual performance evaluations.

Status of concern: The revised policy recognizes and states that guidelines for annual evaluations should be developed at the department level. The revisions of the policy do not prohibit the EMRW committee's plans to continue reviewing annual reports for the goal of developing best practices.

IV.   EMRW recommended changes to white paper that are applicable to this policy.

A.   Flexible, Adaptable, and Individualized Annual Evaluation Reporting. Faculty feedback and committee deliberations emphasized that annual evaluation guidelines should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate differences across and within departments as well as developed and approved at the department level. Thus, the section, "The "Proposed Guidelines for Assessment Criteria by Category," was renamed "Model Annual Evaluation Report" and moved to Appendix I. The revised "Model Annual Evaluation Report" describes possible evaluation elements (dimensions, items/tools, and metrics). It is expected the evaluation elements will be adapted,

augmented, and approved by each department. An additional dimension for teaching was added to include instructional innovation, development, and improvement.

Applicability: this does apply to HOP 2.11 revision, but are fully addressed in that the specific guidelines are developed at the department level. The revised policy does not include specific metrics, weightings, etc. for particular items in the different areas but leaves this to be determined in the departments. The policy does include a statement on "instructional innovation, development, and improvement"

B.   Burdensome and Time Consuming Documentation Requirements. Faculty voiced concerns about the required documentation being overly burdensome and time consuming (e.g. requiring teaching portfolios and detailed service documentation). Thus, reference to teaching portfolios and specific types of documentations were omitted. Documentation requirements will be determined by each department.

Applicability: this does apply to HOP 2.11 revision, but is fully addressed as this is left to departments and policy does not mention portfolios or detailed service documentation.

C.   Prescriptive and Weighted Dimensions for Each Category with Uneven Detail. The majority of faculty reported concerns about the Whitepaper's elaboration of dimensions for each category (teaching, RSC, and service), use of weighted scores for dimensions and items, and the varying level of detail across the three categories. Revisions were made so the only weighted score is the overall average performance evaluation score. It is based upon the average scores for each category and the percent allocated to the category per the annual workload agreement.

Applicability: this does apply, but is addressed in that the policy does not include specific items or weightings within categories. Departments are to determine how to classify performance in each area (research, teaching, service) within the four categories. The weighted score determines merit.