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Faculty Status Committee

May 14, 2024

TO: Washington State University (WSU) Faculty Senate

Dr. Kirk Schulz, President

Dr. Elizabeth Chilton, Provost

FROM: Dr. Alla Kostyukova, Co-chair, WSU Faculty Status Committee

Dr. Aaron Oforlea, Co-chair, WSU Faculty Status Committee

### **Report of the Faculty Status Committee: Academic Year 2023-2024**

#### **Charge and Purpose**

Pursuant to I.B.4 of the Washington State University (WSU) Faculty Manual, we are reporting the WSU Faculty Status Committee (FSC) activities for the 2023-2024 academic year. The FSC is an independent investigative committee elected by the WSU faculty at large. The committee reports and makes recommendations directly to the WSU President and the Faculty Senate. Under provisions of the WSU Faculty Manual:

- (1) Reviews, mediates, and/or adjudicates disputes between individual faculty members and between individual faculty members and the administration.
- (2) Makes recommendations to the Faculty Affairs Committee and the president concerning policies about faculty affairs arising out of its conciliatory and judicial functions.
- (3) Calls special meetings of the faculty or any component thereof, giving reasonable notice, at which time the chair of the Committee shall preside.
- (4) Reviews any problem within its jurisdiction brought to it by any member of the faculty.
- (5) Makes periodic reports (at least annually) to the Faculty Senate and to the faculty concerning its operations.

Our commitment to upholding faculty standards and promoting fairness and integrity within our academic community remains steadfast. We are open to feedback and suggestions for enhancing our processes and ensuring that the FSC fulfills its responsibilities effectively.

#### **Membership:**

FSC members serve non-renewable three-year terms that end on August 15th. The current membership consists of 12 faculty members: 9 tenure-track (tenured) and 3 career-track. The members, their affiliations, and the years they rotate off the committee can be found at <https://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty-status-committee/>.

A ballot to replace members who are finishing their terms was released by the Provost's office on April 8, 2024. New members are Michael Berger (career-track, Associate Professor, School of Biological Sciences, WSU Vancouver), Jessica Goldberger (tenure-track, Professor, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, WSU Pullman), Erin Thornton (tenure-track, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, WSU Pullman), Praveen Sekhar (tenure-track, Associate Professor, School of Engineering and Computer Science, WSU Vancouver). Elected new members and those who were not elected were notified. All elected faculty have responded and accepted appointments.

### **Appeals:**

In Fall 2023 through Spring 2024, the FSC received three complaints determined after preliminary evaluation to be within the Committee scope. Two complaints were from tenure-track faculty, and one was from a career-track faculty member. Subcommittees were established, conducting thorough investigations. Reports of findings were generated and reported at the FSC meetings. Decisions and recommendations were then deliberated during FSC meetings, with the reports formally adopted. Subsequently, decisions were communicated to the President, Senate, Provost, and the relevant faculty member.

### **Other Activities:**

The FSC met on August 31, September 6, September 29, and November 3 of 2023 and on January 11, March 4, March 27, and April 18 of 2024. Minutes are maintained on the FSC Teams site, accessible to all current members. Completed activities include discussing the investigations and nominating new members.

### **Recommendations:**

Some problems presented this year require attention by the provost and/or the Faculty Senate:

The FSC recommends that the Graduate School provide additional education to department chairs to ensure they understand the Doctoral Advisory Committee requirements so they can assist in managing faculty expectations (within and external to their department) in the future.

Each Department/School should develop and implement a mentoring policy, outlining clear expectations and requirements. Such a policy will ensure newly hired faculty members have an official committee for direction and guidance. This recommendation aligns with a similar suggestion made in the FSC 2023 annual report, "a mentoring committee (or at minimum a mentor) is necessary for a given faculty member (career and tenure track), whether seeking tenure and promotion (i.e., assistant professor) or promotion (i.e., associate professor) in addition to the support and guidance of relevant departmental guidelines."

The FSC recommends that the Faculty Senate review the Faculty Manual to provide clarity on how termination procedures apply to interim administrative positions, such as School Directors or other equivalent roles.