August 20, 2014

TO: Washington State University Faculty Senate  
Dr. Elson Floyd, President  
Dr. Daniel Bernardo, Provost and Executive Vice President  
Dr. Frances McSweeney, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

FR: Dr. Kristen Johnson, Co-chair, WSU Faculty Status Committee  
Dr. Stergios Fotopoulos, Co-chair, WSU Faculty Status Committee

RE: 2013-2014 Faculty Status Committee Annual Report

Pursuant Section II.E.4.a.5 of the Washington State University Faculty Manual, we are reporting the activities of the WSU Faculty Status Committee (FSC) for the 2013-2014 academic year. The Faculty Status Committee (FSC) is an independent investigative faculty committee elected by the Washington State University (WSU) faculty at large. The committee reports and makes recommendations directly to the WSU President. Under provisions of the WSU Faculty Manual, a faculty member may appeal non-reappointment, denial of tenure, or deferral of promotion to the FSC. Historically, tenure denials have been the most common type of FSC case. FSC can also be asked to investigate a tenured faculty member’s termination of employment following elimination of a program due to financial exigency or discontinuance of a program or department. FSC also nominates members of the Faculty Hearing Panel and arranges for investigations and hearings prior to disciplinary action. Finally, other types of decisions that a faculty member believes may violate the Faculty Manual may be appealed to the FSC. FSC members serve for three-year terms that end on August 15th.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, the members of FSC were: Stergios Fotopoulos (COB; 2015), Cheryl Gunselman (LIB; 2014), Laura Hill (CAHNRS, 2016), Kristen Johnson (CAHNRS; 2014), Bala Krishnamoorthy (CAS; 2014; replacing Gisela Ernst-Slavit who resigned), Craig Parks (CAS; 2015), Katrina Mealey (CVM; 2016), Robert Quinlan (CAS; 2015), and Julie Anne Wieck (CAS, 2016). Kristen Johnson and Stergios Fotopoulos served as Co-chairs.

Stergios Fotopoulos and Julie Anne Wieck will serve as Co-chairs in 2014-2015. Annual elections were held during the spring semester to replace rotating members and the top three finalists have agreed to serve on the committee, including Jolie Kaytes (CAHNRS), Brian French (CED), and Robert Rosenman (CAHNRS). Laura Hill (CAHNRS) will leave the committee and be replaced by Laura Lavine (CAHNRS). The President accepted all FSC nominations for the Faculty Hearing Panel, which currently includes 21 members (3-year terms) as required by the Faculty Manual.
FSC's investigations are thorough, confidential, and open-ended. Reports of the findings of an FSC investigation are provided only to the appellant and to the President. Under provisions of the Faculty Manual, the FSC can make its own rules of procedure but must meet certain timelines for handling a case. The specific provisions in the Faculty Manual have been approved by the Faculty Senate, the university administration, and the WSU Board of Regents; they should be regarded as authoritative. Further information on FSC's composition, powers, and operations is available in the Faculty Manual, Section I.E.4

FSC received seven appeals for denial of tenure and promotion (T&P), and one appeal for deferral of promotion in the spring of 2014. An additional appeal regarding changes to faculty appointments was also investigated. Appeals were received from three different colleges. Investigations for all P&T appeals were completed by mid-May and reports were forwarded to the appellants and President. The change to faculty appointment appeal was completed in late July. At the time that this report was submitted, the FSC has received no appeals concerning non-reappointment of tenure-track junior faculty (third-year review) from spring 2014.

The Faculty Manual states that appeals must be evaluated on the basis of substantial procedural irregularity, inadequate consideration, and/or violation of academic freedom. Based on these criteria, the FSC recommended to the President that the decision to deny T&P be upheld for seven cases and a decision to set the denial aside was recommended for one case. After reviewing the FSC reports and recommendations, the President chose to set aside two decisions and uphold five denials and one deferral. The FSC found the change in position to not be in keeping with the spirit of Faculty Manual. The President upheld the change in position.

The FSC wants to bring to the forefront several issues of importance that arise with the appeals we receive.

- Given the increasing importance in interdisciplinary work WSU should investigate models by which interdisciplinary scholarship can be evaluated. These collaborations take time to establish and do not fit the traditional T&P model. Six years would seem to be insufficient to take a project from concept to initial publications, through funding to results, especially for someone new to a tenure-line position. Once collaborations are established, how will the junior interdisciplinary researcher demonstrate independence? It might seem that the only way to be successful as a junior interdisciplinary researcher would be to develop two research programs: one independent and one collaborative, the latter of which would not be expected to bear fruit until after tenure. Establishing two research programs does not seem realistic. Should interdisciplinary research be left only to tenured faculty?

- An honest assessment from colleagues of candidates for T&P is necessary for the process to work effectively. We remind faculty members to consider the types of evaluation that are appropriate on a ballot. Serious allegations of misconduct should be reported immediately through appropriate channels for investigation and do not belong on T&P ballots.
• Voting on T&P decisions is a critical part of the faculty rights and responsibilities. As such we would like to remind faculty to refrain from using "abstain" and we suggest that any such ballot should be returned to the faculty member so they may vote. The Faculty Manual is clear that abstention is not an acceptable response on a ballot. Additionally, it is not appropriate for faculty to provide comment and no recommendation on a ballot nor is it appropriate for a person to vote more than once.

• Given the current funding situation and the importance placed on the receipt of funding to support activities in the T&P process, we recommend the tenured faculty discuss their mentoring strategies to ensure those faculty in the T&P stream receive appropriate advice and counsel for the current funding climate.

• The Faculty Manual should be modified to address the rights and responsibilities of endowed chair positions including whether an endowed chair is an administrative appointment or faculty position.

• A discussion between the faculty and administration needs to take place immediately to determine what a letter of appointment or title means. The FSC had several cases this year in which there was a difference of opinion on whether a letter of offer or title was a contract. In these cases the AG’s office and some levels of administration did not believe the letter (or title) was a contract which was contrary to the interpretation of the faculty member. This conversation needs to occur immediately and the FSC believes the Faculty Senate is the best starting place.