8. POLICIES OF THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

8.1 POLICY OF THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS ON THE DUTIES OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

Updated as of July 1, 2018

Note: Throughout the Policies of the Office of Academic Affairs, where the word “department” appears, it means “department, college, or program.”

1. Selection and Tenure of Office of Chair

Election of department chairs is generally for a three-year term by majority vote of those full-time tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty who are teaching at least half-time in the department or have been granted a core affiliation. Only tenured members who are teaching at least half-time in the department or have been granted core affiliation are eligible to serve as chair. Under extraordinary circumstances, a willing non-tenure-track faculty member may be eligible to serve for a one-year term if elected and approved by the vice president for academic affairs (VPAA). After two consecutive three-year terms, a chair must be replaced by another faculty member for at least one term unless (a) there is no one else eligible or (b) the department unanimously re-elects the incumbent. In electing a chair, consideration should not be given to the possibility that he/she may be eligible for a sabbatical or leave during his/her term of office. When a vacancy impends, the election should be held before mid-December if possible.

A member of the faculty may be a voting member of two departments simultaneously in the following circumstances: (a) by right, if he/she teaches half-time in (or for) each of the departments in question or has been granted core affiliation; or (b) by privilege, if he/she is invited to voting membership, even though he/she does not teach half-time in the department extending the invitation. Half-time should be reckoned in terms of the norm formally prevailing in the department in question, with due regard to the course relief to which one is entitled, whether claimed or not, for specified kinds of non-instructional service.

An eligible faculty member is obliged to serve as chair if elected by the department, unless excused by the VPAA following consultation with the incumbent chair and/or the department’s senior faculty. The chair may decline to serve on the Advisory Committee.

2. Faculty Personnel

a. Departmental Organization and Procedures

When warranted, and after appropriate consultation with the department, the
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chair will be responsible for the appointment of committees necessary to the implementation of departmental policies and programs. In consultation with the department, he/she will determine the procedures necessary to the effective and equitable functioning of the department.

b. Recruiting

After appropriate consultation with the department, the chair recruits and coordinates recruiting for the department.

c. Appointment of Tenure-Track and Other Continuing Faculty

The chair, with the concurrence of a majority of the department, and through the divisional dean, recommends to the VPAA the appointment of non-tenured faculty members, including tenure-track faculty, adjunct faculty, professors of the practice, and artists-in-residence. In the case of a joint or shared appointment, the chair shall also consult with the chair of the other relevant department.

d. Appointment of Visiting Faculty

The chair, through the divisional dean, recommends to the VPAA the appointment of visiting faculty members.

e. Appointment of Affiliated Faculty

The chair, with the concurrence of a majority of the department, and through the divisional dean, recommends that the VPAA appoint a faculty member a core, affiliate, or courtesy member of a department. Each model of voluntary affiliation varies along several dimensions, as outlined in Table 1 at the end of this section.

f. Advising of Tenure-Track Faculty

Academic Affairs provides tenure-track faculty members the policy documents that are pertinent to their promotion and tenure reviews. If a tenure-track faculty member has questions about the review process, the chair should be available to help clarify the process and to direct him or her to the relevant documents that are the authoritative sources. The chair may also refer the faculty member to the University officers who may have additional information.

The chair, in consultation with senior faculty colleagues, should keep informed as to the progress of tenure-track faculty in teaching, scholarship, and colleagueship. By April 1 of the second and fifth years of a tenure-track faculty member’s appointment, the chair of each department [or her/his designate(s)], in consultation with the tenured members of the department, shall meet with the tenure-track faculty member for a discussion of the review
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process and her/his progress toward reappointment or promotion. Please note that second and fifth year means year in rank, not necessarily years at Wesleyan. Most often, second-year reviews occur during a faculty member’s fourth semester of Wesleyan teaching and fifth-year reviews occur three semesters prior to the tenure review. This timing, however, may be affected by a variety of circumstances, such as a shorter probationary period due to a faculty member’s prior experience or by Leaves. These circumstances may affect both the timing and the number of reviews.

Departments should be internally consistent in their procedures for conducting second- and fifth-year reviews, but it is both appropriate and inevitable that they may differ one from the other in their approaches to them. Generally, the department chair [or her/his designate(s)] shall provide a written evaluation to the other tenured members of the department for their approval and/or amendments. Once approved by the department, the written evaluation shall be sent to the VPAA for final approval, and then to the non-tenured faculty member. The usual deadline is May 15; for candidates whose review clock differs by a semester, it is generally December 15. The faculty member being reviewed shall have the opportunity to respond in writing as long as the response is filed with Academic Affairs within four months after the submission of the evaluation. The written evaluation and the response, if there is one, will be made available to the Advisory Committee, if requested, when the non-tenured faculty member is being considered for reappointment and/or promotion conferring tenure.

While keeping informed about the progress of the tenure-track faculty member, the chair should exercise due diligence to observe whether any unduly onerous responsibilities associated with University service may be falling disproportionately on that faculty member. The chair, in consultation with the VPAA, should recommend remedies designed to safeguard against the possibility that a candidate’s opportunities for promotion or tenure might be diminished by taking on such responsibilities.

The above processes, combined with the reappointment review, should provide the means for clear and extended communication between tenure-track faculty and the tenured members of their department. Chairs should keep in mind, however, that tenure-track faculty may not accept the advice given to them or may implement it according to their own ideas and abilities. Tenure-track faculty members are responsible for the quality of the scholarship, teaching, and colleagueship that will be evaluated during each of the above reviews.

g. Advising of Other Continuing Faculty

The chair, in consultation with senior colleagues, should keep informed as to the progress of other continuing faculty, including adjunct faculty, professors of the practice, and artists-in-residence, in teaching and colleagueship, and should offer them counsel regularly regarding their performance. The chair’s
responsibility for advising other continuing faculty includes reviewing the process, timing, and criteria by which they are reviewed and evaluated for reappointment and promotion.

**h. Reappointment of Non-Tenured Faculty**

The chair recommends to the VPAA the reappointment of tenure-track and other continuing faculty. Prior to the recommendation, the chair must consult the non-tenured faculty and receive the concurrence of a majority of the tenured faculty. In addition, the chair recommends to the VPAA, through the divisional dean, the reappointment of visiting faculty members. These latter recommendations do not require the concurrence of a majority of the tenured faculty.

**i. Promotion**

(1) The chair recommends to the VPAA promotion conferring tenure. Prior to the recommendation, the chair must consult with the department and receive the concurrence of a majority of the tenured members of the department. (See “Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates for Promotion Conferring Tenure.”) In cases where tenure is not recommended the chair must submit a report to the VPAA detailing the department’s reasons for this recommendation.

(2) The chair recommends to the VPAA promotion to full professor. Prior to the recommendation, the chair must consult with the department and receive the concurrence of a majority of the full professors in the department. (See “Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates to the Rank of Full Professor.”)

**j. Appointment of Tenured Faculty**

The chair recommends to the divisional dean and the VPAA the appointment of tenured faculty. Prior to the recommendation, the chair must consult with the divisional dean, a member of the Advisory Committee, and the department, and receive the concurrence of a majority of the tenured members in the department (or of the full professors in the department, in the case of an appointment at that rank). (See Section 2k, “Consulting and Reporting”, below.)

**k. Consulting and Reporting**

On reappointments, promotions, and conferrals of tenure, chairs must consult all non-tenured members of the department except those in their first and last years at Wesleyan. The counsel of the non-tenured faculty members may be oral or written.

In recommending faculty appointments, reappointments, promotion, or
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conferrals of tenure, the chair is required to make known any minority opinions within his/her department. Especially in recruiting faculty for tenured positions, the chair is expected to report to the VPAA any dissenting opinion of non-tenured faculty.

I. Faculty Compensation

(1) The divisional dean will notify the chair when the department’s recommendation to offer an appointment to a particular candidate has been approved. Where appropriate, the chair will be consulted by the divisional dean regarding the start-up package that will be offered by Academic Affairs.

(2) The chair makes recommendations through the divisional dean to the VPAA on merit increases for continuing faculty. Merit awards are based on performance in scholarship, teaching, and colleagueship since the previous merit review, as described in the annual merit memo from the VPAA.

m. Research Support

The chair, through the divisional dean, consults with Academic Affairs in all matters of research support and use of University research funds affecting members of the department (see “Policy on Use of Departmental Funds from Gifts and Endowments”, below).

n. Sabbaticals and Leaves

The chair is responsible for the short- and long-term planning of sabbatical and leave schedules. This responsibility should be informed by a consideration of the potential impacts on the curriculum of the department and any units it serves and under the assumption that faculty on sabbatical will not be replaced. The recommended schedule is then submitted for approval through the divisional dean, to the VPAA. Decisions to accept or reject chair recommendations will occur after consultation with the chair (see “Academic Affairs statement on Sabbaticals and Leaves”, below).

o. Evaluation of Teaching

The chair assumes primary responsibility for the evaluation of teaching in the department.

3. Departmental Programs, Courses, Curricula

After appropriate consultation with the department, the chair is responsible for preparing the list of departmental courses, supervising existing programs, and submitting to the Educational Policy Committee proposals for the establishment of new departmental and interdepartmental programs.
The chair has the responsibility to review course offerings annually and to recommend to the department the abandonment or addition of courses. New courses must be approved by the divisional dean, who reviews such requests on behalf of the Educational Policy Committee. In doing so, the chair shall ensure that the department fulfills its obligations to the major as well as its responsibilities to the University for providing courses for non-majors, including first-year seminars. The chair must also ensure that courses are spread throughout the day and week in keeping with the course scheduling principles endorsed by the faculty, and that teaching times are distributed equitably among faculty.

Within the policies on teaching loads established by Academic Affairs (see “Policy of the Office of Academic Affairs on Teaching Loads”) and after consultation with departmental faculty, the chair has the responsibility to make appropriate course assignments in individual cases. The chair is also responsible for seeing that teaching responsibilities as well as responsibilities for advising in the major are distributed equitably within the department.

Last, after consulting with the department and obtaining authorization from the divisional deans, the chair has the responsibility for recruiting visitors and replacement instructors for individual courses, when needed.

4. Budget, Personnel, Facilities, and Other Responsibilities

The chair is responsible for the direction and supervision of non-teaching personnel and for the allocation and use of facilities that the University has made available to the department. In consultation with the department, he/she will determine the procedures necessary for the effective and equitable functioning of the department. In consultation with the department, the divisional dean, and the VPAA, he/she will be responsible for determining and directing expenditures within the departmental budget. The administrative assistant should provide regular reports to the chair on the departmental budget and should carry out the chair’s decisions, but the responsibility for making those decisions in accordance with Academic Affairs policy lies with the chair. The chair is also responsible for ensuring that the public information about the department that is on the departmental website and the catalog is accurate and up-to-date.

Academic Affairs schedules mandatory meetings for department chairs, typically twice per semester. Given the increased complexity in faculty governance and often limited experience of many chairs, these meetings are critical opportunities for the VPAA to discuss with chairs matters important for the operation of all departments, and to provide chairs with information necessary for them to do their jobs.

In the rare event that a chair cannot attend a particular meeting, he or she should inform Academic Affairs and appoint a replacement in his or her stead.