POLICY OF THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS ON THE DUTIES OF DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I. 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 faculty who are teaching at least half-time in the department. Only tenured members, who are teaching at least half-time in the department, are eligible to serve as chair, except that, under extraordinary circumstances, a willing non-tenure-track faculty member is eligible to serve for a one-year term if elected, and approved by the 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. In small departments, the election procedure may be quite informal. 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; (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/program, unless excused by the VPAA. The chair may decline to serve on the Advisory Committee or any standing committee of the faculty.

II. Faculty Personnel

2a. Departmental Organization and Procedures

When warranted, and after appropriate consultation with the department, the 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.

2b. Recruiting

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

2c. Appointment of Tenure-track and Adjunct Faculty

After consultation with a member of the Advisory Committee and with the concurrence of a majority of the department, the chair, through the dean of the academic division, recommends to the vice president for academic affairs the appointment of non-tenured faculty members. In the case of a joint or shared appointment, the chair shall also consult with the chair of the other relevant program or department.

2d. Appointment of Per-Course and Visiting Faculty

With the concurrence of a majority of the department, the chair, through the dean of the academic division, recommends to the vice president for academic affairs the appointment of per-course and visiting faculty members.

2e. Advising of Tenure-Track Faculty

The university 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 process and her/his progress toward reappointment or promotion. Please note that second and fifth year means year in rank, not necessarily years at
Department Chairs

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 may affect both the timing and the number of reviews.

Departments and programs 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 or their designates for their approval and/or amendments. Once approved, the written evaluation shall be sent to the non-tenured faculty member and to the Office of Academic Affairs. The usual deadline is May 15th. For candidates whose review clock differs by a semester, it is generally December 15th. The faculty member being reviewed shall have the opportunity to respond in writing as long as the response is filed with the Office of 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 vice president for academic affairs, 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 departments or programs. 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.
2f. Advising of Adjunct Faculty

The chair, in consultation with senior colleagues, should keep informed as to the progress of adjunct faculty members in teaching and colleagueship and should offer them counsel regularly regarding their performance. The chair’s responsibility for advising adjunct faculty includes going over the process, timing, and criteria by which they are reviewed and evaluated for reappointment and promotion.

2g. Reappointment of Non-Tenured Faculty

After consulting with the non-tenured faculty, and with the concurrence of a majority of the tenured faculty, the chair recommends to the vice president for academic affairs the reappointment of tenure-track and adjunct faculty. In addition, the chair recommends to the vice president for academic affairs, through the dean of the division, the reappointment of per-course instructors and visiting faculty members.

2h. Promotion

(1) After appropriate consultation with the department and with the concurrence of a majority of the tenured members of the department, the chair recommends to the president promotion conferring tenure. (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 Advisory Committee detailing the department’s reasons for this recommendation.

(2) After appropriate consultation with the department and with the concurrence of a majority of the full professors in the department, the chair recommends to the president promotion to the full professorship.

2i. Appointment of Tenured Faculty

After appropriate consultation with the academic dean, a member of the Advisory Committee, the department or program (in the case of joint appointments), and with the concurrence of a majority of the tenured members in the department/program (or of the full professors in the department/program, in the case of an appointment at that rank), the chair through the dean of the academic division and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs recommends to the president the appointment of tenured faculty.
Department Chairs

2j. Faculty Compensation

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

(2) The chair makes recommendations through the dean of the division, to the vice president for academic affairs on merit increases for continuing faculty.

2k. Research Support

The chair, through the dean of the academic division, consults with the vice president for academic affairs in all matters of research support and use of University research funds affecting members of the department.

2l. Sabbaticals and Leaves

The chair is responsible for the short and long-term planning of sabbatical and leave schedules. The recommended schedule is then submitted for approval through the dean of the academic division, to the vice president of academic affairs.

2m. Evaluation of Teaching

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

2n. Consulting and Reporting

On reappointments, promotions, and conferrals of tenure, chairs should 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 conferrals of tenure, the chair is expected to make known any minority opinions within his/her department. Specifically, in recruiting faculty for tenured positions, the chair is expected to report to the VPAA and the president any dissenting opinion of non-tenured faculty.
III. 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. 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 initiative seminars. In addition, chairs must insure that the department fulfills its responsibility to offer courses that meet the capabilities. New courses must be approved by the academic dean of the appropriate division, who reviews such requests on behalf of the Educational Policy Committee.

Within the policies on teaching loads established by the Office of 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. He/She is also responsible for seeing that teaching responsibilities as well as responsibilities for advising in the major are distributed equitably within the department. In addition, he/she will 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.

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

IV. 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 or program. In consultation with the department he/she will determine the procedures necessary to the effective and equitable functioning of the department. In consultation with the department, the academic dean of the appropriate division, and the vice president for academic affairs, he/she will be responsible for determining and directing expenditures within the departmental budget. The chair is also responsible for
Department Chairs

ensuring that the public information about the department or program that is on the departmental website and the catalog is accurate and up-to-date.

The chair is responsible for attending meetings for department and program chairs that are usually held twice per term. These meetings are called and chaired by the VPAA to discuss with chairs matters important for the operation of all departments and programs, and to provide chairs with information necessary for them to do their jobs. If a chair cannot attend a particular meeting, he or she should appoint a replacement in his or her stead.

Note: Where the phrase “department chair” appears, it is often to be interpreted as “department and program chair.” Also, where the word “president” appears, it is to be interpreted as “president or his/her delegate.”
Department Chairs