

Academic Diversity & Inclusion Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2021 (online)

Kelly Erby, chair of the Academic Diversity and Inclusion Committee, conducted a meeting via email beginning February 15, 2021.

New Business included discussing and voting on the following statement:

Washburn Academic Diversity and Inclusion Committee (ADIC)

Statement to Faculty Affairs Committee Regarding Faculty Tenure and Promotion Processes in Light of COVID-19

As COVID-19 has accentuated and exacerbated existing inequities in our society and in academe, Washburn's core value of inclusion—a value that calls for facilitating the success of all people and supporting all individuals—has never been more important. The Academic Diversity and Inclusion Committee (ADIC), keeping with its charge to bring greater recognition of matters of diversity and inclusion to university leadership and administration, requests that the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate adopt strong resolutions to assist all faculty in coping with the challenges created by COVID-19. We commend the one-year extension of the tenure clock granted to all current tenure-track faculty members. However, we believe tenure-extensions are not enough to advance the value of inclusion under the present circumstances of the pandemic. [Research](#) shows that while such policies may temporarily relieve certain pressure on faculty, they also delay increases in pay, job security, and authority and tend to benefit men more than women. Moreover, they do nothing to address the needs of non-tenure track faculty or staff, members of our university community who are typically already the most vulnerable in terms of gender identity, race, and socioeconomic class, among other factors.

To that end, we call for Faculty Affairs to make the following additional recommendations:

First, that units engage in unit-level reevaluations of tenure and promotion guidelines. These reevaluations should take into account that the pandemic will affect faculty workload for a currently undefined number of years. Below, we provide information about how other universities have begun to reevaluate tenure requirements and processes in ways that maintain standards of faculty excellence and advance equity within their institutions and the academy.

Second, that Washburn academic leaders, including deans and department chairs, hold units accountable for these reevaluations of tenure and promotion requirements, which should be undertaken as quickly as possible to relieve some of the tremendous workload, pressure, and anxiety faculty currently experience.

Finally, the ADIC calls upon the Faculty Affairs Committee to recommend units consider specific ways to support non-tenure track and part-time faculty, including, but not limited, to changes to annual evaluation criteria and reappointment processes. In addition, the ADIC calls

on faculty governance to advocate on behalf of Washburn staff members. We understand that the Faculty Affairs Committee does not directly represent staff, nor does the Faculty Senate, but we nonetheless request the members of these bodies to leverage their positions of relative power within the University to acknowledge staff members' critical contributions throughout the ongoing crisis of the pandemic, as well as advocate on their behalf.

It is the hope of the ADIC that Washburn will emerge from this crisis a stronger and more inclusive Washburn community. To do so, we must pursue bold steps to support faculty and advance equity and inclusion. The ADIC appreciates the many efforts of FAC in leading these critical conversations thus far.

Resources

Fortunately, there are several institutions that are already deep into the work of proposing revised criteria for tenure and promotion that academic units at Washburn may look to for ideas to adopt or adapt. For example, [West Virginia University](#) is balancing its own high standards for tenure and promotion with the need to support faculty success and equity in the current crisis. Faculty members there may request a redistribution of effort to reflect the increased time that they are spending teaching and mentoring, as well as changes in service loads to reflect their experiences throughout the COVID crisis. The Office of the Provost at West Virginia is also encouraging individual departments to consider recalibrating expectations and criteria regarding research and creative endeavors. This includes expanding the definition of research to include works in support of research goals, innovative teaching, and demonstrated scholarly expertise instead of just counting published books, articles, and creative works.

At [Texas A&M](#), department heads are being encouraged to pursue a faculty-centered approach to faculty evaluations and to consider recalibrating tenure expectations for a period of time that may last several years after 2022. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst is similarly holding workshops for department chairs and for personnel committee members on how to evaluate people in light of disruptions caused by COVID-19.

ASPIRE, the National Alliance for Inclusive and Diverse STEM Faculty, similarly [recommends](#) that departments instruct tenure and promotion committees to apply a “different standard when assessing faculty research and publication activity” for the academic years affected by COVID-19; ASPIRE has also suggested that these different standards may need to remain in place for several years following the most acute crisis years and to consider continuing to do so for some time after COVID.

Thirty-four learned societies endorsed a [strong statement by the American Sociological Association](#) calling for the review and adjustment of faculty evaluation practices in light of the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

North Carolina State University is allowing faculty to write [impact statements](#) and then asking and training evaluators to meaningfully incorporate these statements in annual evaluation and tenure processes. Similarly, the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence at Purdue University has developed [tools](#) to help faculty document the many ways COVID has

impacted their work. See also chapter 10 “Reflections on Institutional Equity for Faculty in Response to COVID-19” of [this](#) working paper.

An [opinion piece](#) in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences states:

“Administration, tenure, and promotion committees should be proactive, not reactive, in their discussion of how to handle the impact of COVID-19.... Faculty will need guidelines on how to quantify impacts of COVID-19 on their three academic pillars. Clear metrics, tangible benchmarks, and effective communication are critical for decreasing bias in merit and promotion decisions.”

Erby asked to suggest any revisions to the statement by noon on February 16. Later in the day on February 16, Erby asked members to vote on whether the statement should be adopted and sent to the Faculty Affairs Committee. Members voted using a form created in Microsoft Forms.

The statement was adopted with a quorum of members voting. The meeting concluded on February 18, 2021.