

SUMMARY: The Motions by the *ad hoc* Committee on Tenure and Faculty Development have the purpose of amending the Faculty Rules with respect to the operations of the Tenure, Promotions, and Appointments Committee; revising the process by which the tenure review is to be conducted, particularly with respect to the solicitation of letters from external evaluators; extending the length of the probationary period; and altering the timing of and procedure for the annual review.

MOTIONS:

That the Faculty, in Part 1, Section 2.VI.B.3 of the Faculty Rules & Regulations on the Tenure, Promotions, and Appointments Committee (TPAC), delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2010.

That the Faculty, in Part 4, Section 10.I.D of the Faculty Rules & Regulations concerning the Tenure Review and Tenure Procedures, delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2010.

That the Faculty recommend to the Brown University Corporation that the policy on Conditions of Tenure and Faculty Reappointments, found in Part 5 of the Faculty Rules & Regulations, be amended to delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2010.

That the Faculty, in Part 4, Section 10.I.D of the Faculty Rules & Regulations, on Annual Reviews and Contract Renewal and Promotions, delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2010.

That the Faculty, in Part 1, Section 2.VI.B of the Faculty Rules & Regulations on the Tenure, Promotions, and Appointments Committee (TPAC), delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2010.

RATIONALE: Last fall, the Provost convened an *ad hoc* Committee on Tenure and Faculty Development with the broad charge of considering whether the University's policies and processes governing faculty support and academic promotion are appropriate to Brown's status as one of the nation's leading research universities. Although the proximate cause of this was the observation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges that in comparison to its peers Brown has historically promoted faculty to tenure at unusually high rates, and the Corporation's ensuing concern with that issue, the NEASC report served primarily as a timely reminder that all institutions benefit from periodic self-examination and reassessment. For the Committee, the goal was not to address the issue of tenure rate so much as to examine our values and aspirations and to assess whether existing practices are consonant with them.

A full discussion of the Committee's work and its recommendations can be found in its March 2010 report. The recommendations were intended, above all, to help make the tenure review process fair and discerning and to provide more effective guidance and support for junior faculty development. They have been discussed at length in the weeks since the report was issued, and

some have been modified in light of those discussions. The proposed revisions to the Faculty Rules in the Motions that follow have the goal of ensuring that Brown's faculty meets the highest standards of excellence. These proposals fall into three broad areas: modifying the tenure review process, including the composition and operation of the Tenure, Promotions, and Appointments Committee; regularizing the system of reviewing junior faculty during the probationary period; and extending the length of the probationary period itself.

The NEASC report noted the tenure rate, and data gathered by the Committee confirmed that Brown's rate is high in relation to peer institutions. Such observations demand significant reflection, but not to ask whether Brown has tenured too many people in the past, nor to seek some arbitrary quota of tenure success or failure. What is instead crucial is an exploration of the equity and rigor of our assessment process, not least because we are approaching a critical demographic transition, as many of the junior faculty hired by the Plan for Academic Enrichment will soon be coming up for tenure and anticipated faculty retirements may lead to increasing turnover in the faculty ranks. It is also worth noting that a high proportion of tenured faculty imposes constraints on hiring and restricts opportunities, limits the ability to expand into new and important areas of scholarship, reduces the turnover that is vital to intellectual renewal, and may eventually degrade academic excellence.

The Committee considered existing tenure procedures in relation to Brown's explicitly stated standards for tenure, with the aim of assessing whether they provide those involved in the review process with the quality of information required to make decisions that are so important and consequential, for the individual and for the institution. Fairness to junior faculty is a crucial desideratum of these recommendations, as is the mandate to ensure faculty excellence at Brown. The desire to ensure that these standards are met underlies the proposed changes to the tenure review process.

The proposed division of TPAC is one example, and is intended to address not only that committee's onerous workload but more importantly to provide more time for members to devote to each case, and to permit a more thorough review by those closest to the candidate's field. The Committee also sought to ensure that TPAC continues to be composed of those faculty colleagues who represent the highest qualities of scholarly achievement, and who are distinguished teachers as well as dedicated citizens of the University.

Likewise, the Committee's recommendations regarding the roles of the candidate, the department, and the Dean in identifying and selecting appropriate external evaluators are aimed at ensuring that the best possible set of evaluators is chosen, so that the information informing the tenure decision is as fair, complete, and robust as possible. The complex process of determining which junior faculty merit tenure and which do not involves faculty, senior administration, and the Corporation (which has ultimate authority to grant tenure). The tenure review process reflects a model of shared governance that includes all three groups, and the proposed changes are designed to ensure that each has the information it needs to make good decisions on behalf of the university. Because tenure decisions are based so fundamentally on an assessment of scholarly accomplishment and promise within an academic discipline as well as ability to teach particular subject matter effectively, the role of faculty – in the candidate's department and on TPAC – is necessarily paramount. Yet the Dean, the Provost, the President, and the Corporation are part of the process as well; since their decisions are informed by the evidence available to them, there is an obvious interest in ensuring that the information is of the highest quality.

The second set of issues concerns improvements to the review process during the probationary period. Several proposals reflect a desire to ensure that junior faculty receive good feedback

throughout the probationary period. There are at present inconsistencies in the manner in which junior faculty are mentored and supported in their early years at Brown. Some, indeed many, departments do an excellent job in this regard, others do not; some offer the necessary constructive advice and thoughtful feedback to candidates, others do not. Among those proposed changes that are intended to ensure fair and equitable treatment of junior colleagues are those recommending that the Dean vet a draft of the annual review and that there be a written assessment at the conclusion of the reappointment review. Others are intended to improve the quality of information available at the time of review, including the longer probationary period and the deferral of the reappointment review to the beginning of the fourth year in rank.

In its work, and in the ensuing discussions with faculty, the Committee has been aware that there are those who oppose some – or even all – of these changes, regarding them as unnecessary or intrusive. Some have asked why we need to look to our peers at all, asserting that Brown should not worry or care what other institutions do to ensure the quality of their tenure appointments. This, it seems to the Committee, is short-sighted. We do not live in a separate world. The university's scholarly reputation, faculty salaries, the quality of its students and of its academic programs are all evaluated relative to our peers. There are important ways in which Brown is, and should continue to be, exceptional. But these are guaranteed only by the excellence and commitment of our faculty.

The proposed changes to our present system of assessing and awarding tenure are very modest in the broader landscape of the tenure review systems found in other major universities. Far more radical options were considered, in line with peer institutions: for example, procedures that involve replacing the standing, elected faculty tenure committee with *ad hoc* committees of experts chosen in each case by the administration. Such options were judged to be inconsistent with Brown's culture and values, and the Committee rejected them as out of keeping with our traditions of faculty governance and procedural transparency – even while recognizing the need to strengthen the system of checks and balances.

Facing issues related to review processes is never an easy task, in part because the need to implement measures designed to ensure faculty excellence and distinction comes into direct contact with the lives of colleagues and friends, and can at times produce painful choices. Yet we all share the goals of preserving objectivity and fairness in a rigorous tenure review process, and ensuring that Brown lives up to its own highest standards. The Motions to amend the Faculty Rules are intended to do just that.

One final point. We ask that in considering the importance of these Motions the faculty think not primarily in terms of their own departmental situation, but rather in terms of what is best for the University as a whole. It is the Committee's belief that, if these Motions are adopted, an already strong university will become even stronger.