

Subject: FRC Discussion in Senate

Date: Thursday, June 2, 2011 8:30:40 AM MT

From: Dean Saitta

To: Frank Laird, Gregg Kvistad, Don McCubbrey, Scott Leutenegger

CC: Dean Saitta

Dear all,

I'm grateful for the presentation Frank gave at the last Senate meeting. I have a couple more comments to submit as follow-up.

First, the FRC does no favor to shared governance by always deferring to unit level committees on the substantive question of tenure and promotion. It's no secret to even the most junior of faculty that the academic unit compiling and representing the evidentiary record is always an interested party regardless of whether it has decided for or against the candidate. Even granting a high degree of professionalism departments always engage in a certain amount of "case-making" that may not be entirely consistent with the evidentiary record. This is why some of my more perceptive junior colleagues in AHSS (with whom I spoke as part of my involvement in a recent exercise to clarify the role of the Divisional committee in the AHSS P&T process) suggested that the higher-level Divisional Committee have a much broader role than simply checking a case for procedural regularity. Instead they quite reasonably believe that the Divisional committee should be able to probe and augment the evidentiary record itself if they are to make a truly "independent evaluation and recommendation" (as stipulated by AHSS policy) in a case. This is something that a large number of quality institutions already allow, and it's certainly something that's within the purview of the FRC.

As noted last Friday, our Senate constitution grants the FRC power to recommend remedies for procedural inadequacies and [substantive] inequities and injustices. This is not a license to undermine faculty governance at the unit-level or a loophole to let poets tell physicists (or vice versa) how to run their shops. Rather, it's a warrant for faculty who are experienced and competent at reviewing tenure materials to independently evaluate whether external peer letters, comparisons with other recently-tenured faculty in the unit, and other lines of evidence (including the new material that accumulates as the case moves through various appellate, reconstituted, and standing committees in its journey from department to Provost) support the substantive lower-level recommendations. The policy describing FRC freedoms and powers also serves as an important safeguard to prevent—if I can put it bluntly—multiple executions of a candidate by the same lower-level firing squad(s). Human nature alone would suggest that questionable lower-level recommendations are not likely to change if their authors have been called out for not following the rules in previous rounds of case-making.

Second, it continues to be a mystery to me why administrators and many faculty refuse to count governance activities as part of the everyday professional obligations of faculty members, preferring instead to see them as non-essential add-ons to the "real" business of teaching and research. Faculty are not workers on a shop floor tasked with producing and disseminating widgets. ODEO and HR could certainly stand to learn that. Shared Governance is the third leg of a stool that protects freedom in Teaching and Research and significantly contributes to excellence in both enterprises. If this fact was more widely appreciated we might achieve, among other

things, the common understanding of shared governance desired by our Senate leaders and timelier handling of appeals from colleagues-in-crisis desired by the AAUP membership.

Thanks,
Dean

Dean J. Saitta
Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology
President, DU Chapter AAUP
Co-President, Colorado Conference AAUP
University of Denver
Sturm Hall 146-S
2000 East Asbury Street
Denver, CO 80208
Phone: 303-871-2680
Fax: 303-871-2437
Web: <http://portfolio.du.edu/dsaitta>
Contemporary Urban Anthropology: <http://contemporaryurbananthropology.com>
EU-US Atlantis/FIPSE Project: <http://portfolio.du.edu/atlant>