

# FACULTY HANDBOOK

Assessment of faculty performance should recognize the importance of both teaching and research and their extension beyond the borders of the campus as part of the outreach dimension. Assessment should take into account the quality of outcomes as well as their quantity, and also acknowledge the creativity of faculty effort and its impact on students, others the University serves, and on the field(s) in which the faculty member works. In many cases, individual scholarly activities are the ways in which faculty demonstrate excellence. Collaborative scholarly efforts, cross-disciplinary activities and the integration of scholarship in the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge also should be recognized as relevant dimensions of faculty performance.

Deans review independently each recommendation for appointment, reappointment, promotion, and tenure and approve or disapprove them, taking into account unit, college, and University criteria and other factors such as quality, progress, resources, program needs, percent of tenured faculty in the unit, and any other relevant University policies and goals (see below).

The Office of the Provost will review each recommendation for reappointment, the awarding of tenure and promotion and in each case will focus primarily on the evidence of the effectiveness of the individual in the performance of academic duties. Within this context, faculty must demonstrate substantive and sustainable achievement in both teaching and research and the infusion of this scholarship in outreach programs.

In addition, as applicable, the following elements, which relate to individual performance or institutional contextual factors, all of which relate to quality, will be considered:

Those factors which relate most closely to individual performance include, but are not limited to:

- In each case, solid evidence of consistent and persistent professional improvement and effectiveness at MSU sufficient to serve as a basis for predicting continued professional achievement and growth for the remainder of the individual's academic career.
- Evidence of actual and/or potential external competition for employment in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)<sup>1</sup> Universities or institutions of at least comparable quality.
- The history of salary increases awarded the individual relative to others in the unit.
- Evidence of having met the standards of the college and department/school for recommendation of appointment, reappointment, award of tenure, and promotion.

Those factors which relate most closely to institutional contextual factors include, but are not limited to:

- Standards of the college and department/school for recommendation of appointment, reappointment, award of tenure, and promotion.
- Progress of the unit toward achieving and maintaining diversity and recognition of diversity in the unit's definition of quality. The standards for progress are to be found in activities required by the University's Affirmative Action Plan, as referred to in the *Manual of Planning and Hiring Procedures for Academic Personnel*, by the statement on "Faculty Career Advancement and Professional Development: A Special Affirmative Action Responsibility" found in the *Faculty Handbook*, and by unit participation in diversity activities supported by departments/schools and colleges.

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<sup>1</sup>University of Chicago; University of Illinois; Indiana University; University of Iowa; University of Michigan; Michigan State University; University of Minnesota; Northwestern University; Ohio State University; Pennsylvania State University; Purdue University; University of Wisconsin-Madison.

- Every freshman, in his or her first semester, will have at least one regular course with 35 or fewer students.

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## Faculty Teaching Evaluation

### Issue:

Many professors who devote a substantial proportion of their effort to instructional activities believe that teaching is widely undervalued at Michigan State University. They see the lack of objective evidence about teaching performance as one of the reasons that there are not effective rewards for teaching excellence. Most faculty criticize the use of the Student Instructor Ratings (SIRS) form as the main (and often the only) means to evaluate the quality of teaching. Few faculty believe that the SIRS form, or any short-answer form, can provide adequate information on teaching quality to the reviewed faculty member or the reviewing administrator. None of the faculty have indicated a desire to eliminate the evaluation of their teaching as part of their overall evaluation. The complaints focus on the inadequacy of the current methods for such evaluation, and on the lack of qualifications of those performing the evaluations.

The committee believes that well-designed instructor-ratings forms are one potential source of valuable information about teaching effectiveness and quality. However, the interpretation of the information that they provide needs to utilize knowledge of a number of procedural and contextual variables that can significantly influence student responses. Faculty believe that department chairs and relevant faculty committees should take better account of the research and literature on teaching evaluation when making personnel decisions using data from the SIRS forms. The committee also believes that even with a valid and reliable SIRS form (and even when contextual and procedural influences are appreciated and taken into account), data from the SIRS forms should never be used as the only index of teaching performance.

### Recommendations:

#### Short-Term

The Provost should:

- Encourage the University Committee on Academic Policy to act on current and new initiatives to evaluate and improve the SIRS forms and other instruments used to obtain students' faculty ratings.

The University should:

- Use existing mechanisms, such as the Lilly/Faculty Seminar Series, to inform unit administrators about the complexities associated with the interpretation of students' faculty ratings.
- When evaluating teaching, use other sources of information in addition to SIRS forms, which will complement students' faculty ratings. These sources may include a teaching portfolio, statements by alumni about the impact and quality of instruction, and documentation of initiatives to improve instruction.

#### Long-Term

The University should:

- Give the assessment of the quality of teaching the same priority as the assessment of the quality of

research.

- Include an assessment of how the department or the college evaluates teaching performance and rewards its excellence in the evaluation of each unit or college administrator.

#### **Measure of Success:**

- No unit on campus will ignore the issue of valid evaluation of teaching.
- No unit on campus will use students' faculty evaluations as the only source of information to make personnel decisions.

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### **Recognition of Faculty Accomplishments**

#### **Issue:**

There should be broader and more frequent and effective internal/external recognition of a wider range of faculty accomplishments. The issue has at least three dimensions. First, many faculty perceive that formal recognition for faculty accomplishments in teaching, research, and outreach/service is not effectively acknowledged at the unit or university levels. Neither the central administration, college deans, nor the general public are aware of the significant accomplishments made by many faculty. Second, the processes and outcomes of mechanisms aimed at faculty recognition currently in place are inadequate for identifying faculty accomplishments, biased toward a narrowly defined set of accomplishments, and not always effectively communicated to the media. Third, there is wide variation in the mechanisms for faculty recognition at the unit level.

A pervasive perception is that some of the awards are gotten by individuals or units that are adept in going after them, while other deserving faculty without the time and unit support are overlooked. Internally, this lack of consistent support for faculty work through recognition and reward contributes to low faculty morale and feelings that there is a lack of respect and appreciation for their achievements. Externally, this issue invites missed opportunities to educate and to promote positive images of the faculty and the University to its stakeholders, students, and peer institutions. The lack of systematic oral and written recognition of many faculty accomplishments may eventually result in the extinction of valued (but often unrecognized) faculty contributions. As the adage states: "What gets rewarded, gets done!"

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Short-Term**

The University should:

- Create a new faculty-recognition panel that would celebrate faculty accomplishments. The panel would decide, based on faculty-at-large input, the nature and types of accomplishments deemed appropriate for recognition. The number of faculty to be recognized would be determined by the panel, with consideration of available resources. The panel would recommend awards/rewards for recognition, as well as publicity approaches. Due consideration of individual preferences for the reward/award/publicity should be given.
- One method that the panel might adopt would be a "word of mouth" excellence search. The panel would seek out and confirm, in place of the current nominations strategy.
- Refocus the MSU News Bulletin, with faculty as the primary target audience.
- Organize dinners and receptions recognizing faculty who have been promoted, achieved tenure,

The same public-mindedness we bring to outreach and service should inform our treatment of students. We should encourage both individual experimentation and the study of new knowledge and theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning. We should provide grant opportunities for teaching enhancement and improvement and for course development; encourage the scholarship of teaching through recognition and rewards, and provide opportunities to publish and exchange results of such research.

We must develop our own forms of the emerging scholarship of teaching, suitable to a AAU/ land grant university, not only by making teaching a part of our internal discourse at the university, but also by participating in national conversations through publication, papers and workshops; faculty should be supported to attend such conferences as listeners as well as presenters. In view of our land-grant tradition, we should take a lead in shaping faculty roles for the twenty-first century by developing and hosting such national and international meetings.

### **Increase Attention to Evaluation and Rewards for Teaching.**

We must develop a rich variety of ways to recognize, reward and celebrate excellence in teaching at the unit, college and university levels, such as department, college and university teaching awards, celebration of teaching dinners, student group 'favorite teacher' awards and other imaginative ways to recognize the importance of teaching in our community of scholars.

We must develop, at the unit level, guidelines for effective teaching to evaluate faculty for reappointment, promotion and tenure, and ensure that these are considered at all levels at

which promotion, salary and tenure decisions are made. Guidelines should be sufficiently flexible to allow academic freedom, and should be accepting of diversity and individual difference in teaching methods.

FACULTY COM. ON TEACHING