

Report of the Senate Committee on Faculty and the Academic Mission (SCOF)

General Committee Charge

The Senate Committee on Faculty and the Academic Mission (“SCOF”) oversees and advises SEC on matters relating to the University’s policies and procedures concerning the academic mission, including the structure of the academic staff, the tenure system, faculty appointments and promotions, faculty research, and faculty governance. In general, the Committee deals with the matters covered by the following sections of the University’s Handbook for Faculty and Academic Administrators: I.E.-F., H.2., II.A.-D.

2021-2022 Specific Charges

1. Address systemic racism and other forms of inequity by assessing and evaluating ways to change University structures, practices, and biases at the University, school, departmental, and individual levels. Examples include eligibility for leadership roles, differential standards for faculty evaluation based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information, department-level voting privileges, biases implicit in quantitative methods for evaluating faculty, evaluation of effectiveness of campus mental health and wellness programs.
2. Following the recent recommendation of SCOF, propose a draft amendment to the Faculty Handbook that would require school and/or departmental faculties to formalize bylaws and/or standing rules that address voting privileges, hiring procedures, rights and privileges of faculty by rank, committee appointment processes, and related matters.
3. Review and comment on Instructor and Course Evaluation Reports with a focus on their uses in student course selection, improvement of the quality of delivered courses, and hiring, tenure, promotion, and merit-based salary increase decisions.
4. Jointly with SCSEP, review and comment on existing methods for eliciting student feedback to enhance learning experiences. Examples include mid-course or ongoing feedback mechanisms available to the instructor to aid in course re-thinking and re-direction and in the identification of students who may need assistance.
5. Review working definitions of “engaged scholarship” in departments and schools that have determined it should be counted in faculty activity reports, monitor the extent to which standards are articulated for them, and recommend ways in which broader impacts of engaged scholarship might be recognized and rewarded in the promotion and compensation process.

Extenuating circumstances throughout the academic year resulted in charges that will require continued attention during the 2022-23 academic year.

To address Charge #2, SCOF drafted, unanimously approved, and forwarded to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) a “Resolution on Formalizing and Making Accessible School and Departmental Faculty Bylaws or Standing Rules”. SEC endorsed the resolution during its April 2022 meeting. The [meeting summaries of SEC](#) and [the resolution](#) are available for review in previous issues of *Almanac*.

Separately, SCOF convened a joint meeting with the Senate Committee on Students and Educational Policy (SCSEP) in which they summarized and discussed recent attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of course evaluations in undergraduate schools. (Information on these recent attempts was received, by Faculty Senate request, from representatives of the Office of the Vice Provost for Education.)

SCOF and SCSEP agreed to continue their collective review of existing methods for eliciting student feedback on courses and the ways they are used in (1) enhancing student learning experiences and (2) annual faculty evaluations. One point of divergence might be in communicating with students about how the goals of learning and of evaluation are expressed to students in the classroom and separately on the faculty level about setting faculty evaluations in context. It was noted that recent research suggests the use of course evaluations not as evidence of teaching effectiveness but rather as evidence of student experiences with that faculty member¹. SCOF and SCSEP will consider approaches to setting the context on the faculty side on how to interpret the results of Penn’s existing evaluation systems and figuring out ways to help faculty effectively communicate to students what the role of the evaluations are.

Proposed Charges for SCOF in 2022-2023:

1. Address systemic racism and other forms of inequity by assessing and evaluating ways to change University structures, practices, and biases at the University, school, departmental, and individual levels. Examples include eligibility for leadership roles, differential standards for faculty evaluation and compensation based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, department-level voting privileges, biases implicit in quantitative methods for evaluating faculty, evaluation of effectiveness of campus mental health and wellness programs.
2. Review and comment on workloads, expectations, and differences among school and departmental faculties and identify equity issues that may arise.
3. Review and comment on Instructor and Course Evaluation Reports with a focus on their uses in student course selection, improvement of the quality of delivered courses, and hiring, tenure, promotion, and merit-based salary increase decisions.
4. Review and comment on existing methods for eliciting student feedback to enhance learning experiences. Examples include mid-course or ongoing feedback mechanisms available to the instructor to aid in course re-thinking and re-direction and in the identification of students who may need assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rebecka Peebles, PSOM/Pediatrics, *Co-Chair*
Ariana Chao, Nursing
Alexander Reiter, Veterinary Medicine
Amy Stornaiuolo, GSE
Julia Ticona, Annenberg

Ex-officio members:

Roger Allen, SAS/Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (*PASEF non-voting representative*)
William Braham, Weitzman Design, Faculty Senate Chair
Vivian Gadsden, GSE, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Annenberg, Faculty Senate Past Chair

¹ Kreitzer RJ and Sweet-Cushman J. (2021.) *Journal of Academic Ethics* (2022) 20:73–84