

# Baylor University

## Faculty Senate Newsletter

November 2002

*The 2002-03 Faculty Senate officers and membership:*

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**Chair:** Charles Weaver  
(Arts and Sciences)

**Chair-elect:** Joe Cox  
(Business)

**Secretary:** Eric C. Rust  
(Arts and Sciences)

**Publicity:** Pat Sharp  
(Education)

**Arts and Sciences:**

Robert Baldrige  
Rosalie Beck  
Gregory Benesh  
Anne-Marie Bowery  
Raymond J. Cannon  
William F. Cooper  
Tom Hanks  
Larry Lehr  
David L. Longfellow  
Ann McGlashan  
Linda McManness  
Jim Patton  
Kevin Pinney  
Eric C. Rust  
Charles Weaver  
F. Ray Wilson II  
David Young

**Nursing:**  
Linda Haynes

**Truett Seminary:**  
Liz Ngan

**Business:**

Joe A. Cox  
Mark G. Dunn  
Kent Gilbreath  
Patricia Norman  
Charles W. Stanley  
Jane G. Williams

**Education:**

Dale Connally  
Eric L. Robinson  
Pat T. Sharp

**Engineering and  
Computer Science:**

Henry Walbesser

**Law:**

Marianne Auld

**Libraries:**

Ellen Brown

**Music:**

Jane Abbott-Kirk  
Michael Jacobson

**Honor's College**

Lynn Tatum

**Retired Faculty**

Rufus Spain

## STANDARDS FOR TENURE

Two truths come to mind as one reflects on tenure at Baylor and at colleges and universities across the United States. The first is that the gaining of tenure is one of the most important professional accomplishments a faculty member can achieve. This is largely owing to tenure's attendant privileges, particularly the freedom to pursue academic questions without fear of one's livelihood being threatened; but the attainment of tenure also signals to the academic community that one has gained a highly envied and merited status, akin, on the one hand, to earning the doctoral degree, or, on the other, to winning an international academic prize. The second truth about tenure is that the higher an institution is in its own self-understanding, or in the general perception of the academic community, or in the various rankings made of American colleges and universities, the higher the standards are for gaining tenure.

I assume that the first truth has applied to Baylor faculty members for as long as the tenure system has been in place in our university. The second truth has taken on particular relevance and significance for us in recent years as a result of our enhanced aspirations as a university, stated in concrete form a year ago in our vision document, Baylor 2012. There can be little doubt that the standards for tenure across the university are higher today than they have ever been in the history of Baylor.

However, I believe that there are two additional reasons beyond our enhanced institutional aspirations that have led to higher standards for tenure at our university. The first is that we are more intentional today than at any previous time in our history in our efforts to maintain our identity as a mission-driven institution. Our 157-year history as a serious Christian university within the Baptist tradition has helped to create a consciousness of mission within our university culture that, almost by definition, is particular to Baylor. At the same time, being mission-driven is in itself **not** particular to Baylor because all across American higher education today, colleges and universities—especially private ones—are being increasingly strategic in shaping their identities and academic emphases to establish and exploit (in the

the best sense of the word) the appropriate niches available in the marketplace of higher education. In such an environment, it should not be surprising that the awarding of tenure would be strongly linked, as it is at Baylor, to a faculty member's support of the institution's mission.

The second reason that the standards for tenure at Baylor are now higher is our increased emphasis on research and scholarly/creative activity. Not so long ago in Baylor's history, research and scholarship were perceived almost exclusively as preparation for the classroom. After all, at that time teaching was what Baylor faculty were hired to do, and they were expected to do a lot of it—with full course loads and many different course preparations. It was only twenty or so years ago that Baylor faculty members were for the first time explicitly encouraged by the administration to engage in research, an action that represented an important shift in policy. But five years ago, an even more significant shift occurred. The administration, with the full support of the Council of Deans, mandated that research and scholarly/creative activity would be expected of all tenured and tenure-track faculty. Questions regarding quality and quantity of research and scholarly/creative activity were wisely left unanswered at that time, with the assumption that additional institutional experience would help us answer these questions appropriately, both across the university and department by department. But regardless of how the details would be resolved, the new policy made clear that successful performance in research and scholarly/creative activity, disseminated in standard ways, were no longer optional for tenured and tenure-track faculty.

This past summer, in an effort to resolve some of these details and to achieve greater clarity about scholarly expectations for tenure-track faculty, an all-day workshop was conducted for department chairs, deans, and others (about seventy in number) to discuss faculty evaluation, with a special focus on scholarship requirements for tenure. A major outcome of this workshop was a call for every department and/or school to develop appropriate criteria and guidelines in the area of scholarship for tenure-track faculty, to be recommended to the appropriate dean by December 1, 2002. In a memorandum to the deans dated September 4, 2002, I offered specific areas of consideration that all departments/schools should take into account in the development of the

discipline-specific criteria and guidelines for research and scholarship. (Copies of this memorandum may be obtained from your department chair or dean.) I am confident that the results of the work now taking place in departments and schools throughout the university will be of enormous benefit not only in laying out with greater clarity the scholarly expectations of tenure-track faculty, but also in helping to solidify our own role as an evolving research university.

As I stated in my address to the faculty on August 22 of this year, the increased importance of research and scholarly/creative activity should **not** be gained at the expense of service. The service component should perhaps not be weighted as heavily for tenure-track faculty as for tenured faculty, specifically because tenure-track faculty members should not be asked to assume administrative duties during their probationary period and should not be given any major committee assignments during the first three years of their appointments. However, the service component for tenure-track faculty members should nevertheless still clearly emphasize the importance, within the context of Baylor's mission, of student mentoring, interpersonal relationships, general university citizenship and support, and service to their professional field, the local community, and a local congregation.

Excellent teaching must also remain an essential requirement for tenure. Although in the past we have relied largely on student evaluations as a measure of teaching effectiveness, it is important that we develop a plan for peer review of teaching to be added to the tenure process. I have asked all the deans to institute a system for the peer review of teaching this academic year, beginning with tenure-track faculty and lecturers. Such an evaluation process will provide more reliable evidence than the current student evaluations on which to base our judgments regarding the teaching performance of tenure candidates. (I have often held up as a model for the peer review of teaching the work done in this area by our own Law School. See Melissa Essary's article in the September 2002 edition of the *Baylor News*, entitled "The Peer Review of Teaching.") I return now to the issue of tenure as it relates to the mission-driven nature of Baylor. Because the mission of Baylor is intimately connected to our religious identity, a tenure candidate must give evidence of a faithful commitment both to a local congregation and to the mission of Baylor as a

Christian university. . These two elements are linked because the beliefs and practices of both should be mutually complementary. Our work at Baylor should not be viewed as merely a job or a phase in one's career, but primarily as a service to others, to our academic disciplines, and to God. In short, it should be understood as a calling, as a faithful ministry within the orders of this world. Consequently, there is nothing arbitrary about the university's interest in one's congregational involvement or one's support of the mission of Baylor as a Christian university. It is vitally important for the future of Baylor that tenure candidates exhibit over time, and be able to give a persuasive account of, their support of Baylor's mission in all relevant respects.

So it is true that the standards for tenure at Baylor are indeed higher than ever before. That is a sure sign of a strong and thriving university. The main task before us now is to continue to clarify, with appropriate consistency across all the departments and schools, the expectations of faculty members who hold tenure-track appointments. While we seek to further clarify expectations, however, such an effort cannot and should not be reduced to minute delineations and measurements. Judgment—good judgment—will surely be in the mix, and rightly so. For it will always require good judgment to predict the likely quality, broadly understood, of a faculty member's performance at Baylor after he or she has been awarded tenure. Yes, we must clarify expectations, but there will always be the need for tenured colleagues as well as academic administrators to make good judgments regarding those who will in the future hold the honored position of "tenured faculty member" at Baylor University.

Donald D. Schmeltekopf

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

September 23, 2002

### MESSAGE FROM THE FACULTY SENATE CHAIR

Evaluation in academia is difficult under the best of circumstances. Comparing faculty who work in different areas of a discipline is tough. Comparing faculty in completely different disciplines is even worse. Even so, faculty evaluation is a central part of an institution's responsibility, and one which has to be taken seriously.

Tenure decisions are the most obvious example of faculty evaluation—and a tremendous source of anxiety among tenure-track faculty. I have often told my graduate students who are beginning careers in academia to be mindful of the self-directed nature of the profession. Unlike many professions, I tell them, when it comes to our daily activities we get very few reinforcements and even fewer punishments—but the punishments are extremely painful.

In theory, tenure decisions are not a simple matter of identifying a set of goals that must be accomplished prior to receiving a "lifetime appointment." Instead, tenure is a determination of whether one has provided evidence to suggest that they are likely to be productive, contributing teacher/scholars for the foreseeable future. Past accomplishments are useful only to the extent that they indicate the promise of future contributions to the scholarly environment.

In reality, of course, tenure-track faculty do need some sort of guidance, and deserve to have objective standards by which they can evaluate progress. It would be irresponsible and unethical for us to tell junior faculty to go about their business as they see fit, and tenured faculty and senior administrators will somehow "divine" their worth after six years.

Fortunately, in most areas of evaluation past behavior is not only a good indicator of future productivity, it is a very good indicator. Those who demonstrate skilled teaching prior to tenure will almost certainly continue to be outstanding teachers. Those who are productive in terms of scholarly output prior to tenure are likely to remain so.

I appreciate the Provost's willingness to comment on standards for retention and tenure at Baylor. Faculty who are working toward tenure need clearly articulated standards from those making tenure decisions. The Provost's directive to individual academic units to develop these standards is a positive step, and we encourage faculty to take the central role in this process. (We have also asked that the same directive be given with respect to evaluation and promotion of tenured faculty, with clearly articulated standards for both A & B faculty.)

One area that remains elusive—and not coincidentally generates tremendous anxiety among tenure-track faculty—is the degree to which one "contributes to the mission of the university." Unlike things like number of publications or student evaluations, this area defies simple quantification. Since tenure decisions are by necessity private, very little about the actual decision process is shared with faculty in a formal sense. The absolute number of faculty granted or denied tenure is often known, but information about specific cases is relegated to the proverbial grapevine. I have no doubt that the grapevine conveys some aspects of tenure decisions accurately. I am just as certain that other aspects become distorted. The privacy of the tenure process combined with the less quantifiable nature of mission-related activity often produces reports that tenure decisions were driven by a faculty member's lack of such activities.

How can this problem be remedied? The keys, I believe, lie in a clear statement of what is expected of faculty when it comes to “mission-related activities,” and a willingness on the part of evaluators (both faculty and administrators) to identify potential problems during the pre-tenure years.

What would constitute clear expectation of faculty? Just as we don't have an absolute checklist of research expectations, we cannot expect to have absolute guidelines here. But the major difference between teaching and publication expectations and mission-related expectations is this: with the first two categories, there is consensus as to what the faculty member can do to demonstrate excellence. We can quibble about quantity of scholarship—are two publications enough, or are four insufficient—but there is (general) agreement as to what constitutes scholarly output. The same is true for teaching. No single measure of teaching effectiveness exists, but we generally agree on how it might be assessed.

Similar standards need to be developed for mission-related activities. When tenure-track faculty ask us, “How can we demonstrate our support for the mission of the University?” we have an obligation to tell them.

What might these activities be? I am frequently told, as Chair of the Faculty Senate, that we need to increase communication and trust with those in administrative positions. This strikes me as a perfect opportunity for faculty and administrators to collaborate. Faculty alone could produce a document on mission-related activity, but it would be worthless if the actual standards used by those making tenure decisions were different. The described activities may be neither necessary nor sufficient, but they would indicate what faculty can do to demonstrate mission-related support. I have always been more comfortable evaluating a colleague's behavior than their sincerity of faith.

Finally, faculty members need to take the evaluation of junior colleagues seriously. It is never easy to give critical feedback to those with whom we work closely, but it is essential. Faculty who should be more productive in their research, more sensitive in their teaching—or more attentive to their mission-related activities—need to be told this while they have time to make changes. No faculty member should be surprised by the outcome of a tenure vote, and both faculty and administrators have an obligation to see this is true.

Chuck Weaver, Chair  
Faculty Senate



## FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEES

**Faculty Committee on Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Environment -**

Senator Ann McGlashan

**Faculty Committee on Enrollment Management -** Senator Ray Cannon

**Faculty Committee on Physical Facilities -** Senator Rosalie Beck

**Faculty Committee on Student Life and Services -** Senator Ray Wilson, II

## Faculty Senate Meeting Dates

**All meetings scheduled for Cashion 303 at 3:30 p.m.**

~~December 10, 2002~~

January 23, 2003

February 18, 2003

March 18, 2003

April 15, 2003

May 6, 2003

## Faculty Senate Website

**[http://www.baylor.edu/~Fac\\_Senate/senatehome.html](http://www.baylor.edu/~Fac_Senate/senatehome.html)**

The Senate website has minutes, meeting dates, membership, and other important information. Please send suggestions to: Pat\_Sharpe@Baylor.edu.

### **The Senate wishes to thank:**

Dan Williamson for assistance with the Faculty Senate web page.

Rona Stefka for assistance with the Faculty Senate Newsletter.