In 1998, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) issued a call for proposals for “Projects with Promise” as part of the New Pathways II: Post-Tenure Review (PTR) Initiatives. AAHE offered support to institutions with post-tenure review in order to ensure smooth implementation of programs, to enhance certain operational aspects, or to deal with problems that may have arisen during implementation.

This is the first of three articles based on a workshop presented by the authors at AAHE’s Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards in February 2000. Subsequent articles will focus on “Faculty Evaluation and the Annual Review” and “Providing Feedback to Faculty.” This article concentrates on the results of analyses of documents and interviews of deans, department chairs, and faculty members at three baccalaureate institutions that have adopted processes of PTR.

BACKGROUND

Post-tenure review (PTR) is a system of periodic evaluation that surpasses many traditional forms of continuous evaluation used in most colleges and universities. Various reports indicate that from 46% to 61% of institutions have PTR, and as many as 28% may be considering instituting it. More than 30 states have undertaken activities related to post-tenure review (Licata & Morreale, 1999), and it is widely accepted that faculty should be directly engaged in its design.

There are two types of consequential post-tenure review. Periodic review involves all tenured faculty members, occurs on a timed cycle, and includes the development of a professional growth and improvement plan. The second type of PTR, initiated or trigged review, calls for a developmental plan for faculty members whose performance has been determined to be unsatisfactory during a specific time frame.

PTR may result in evaluations that are summative (provide information that is used to make a personnel decision) or formative (ensure that the talents of each member are continually developed so that they serve the individual, the academic discipline, the students, and the institution). Institutions
often combine both summative and formative elements so that PTR provides an objective view of what has transpired and a stimulus for targeted plans for future development and improvement.

Department chairs have always contributed significantly to faculty evaluation and faculty development, but the stakes change for faculty and chairs in systems of post-tenure review. PTR requires chairs to document the performance and communicate the results of review to tenured faculty. These formal reviews affect salaries and other resources, workloads, professional development opportunities, and perhaps even career decisions. Since the repercussions of PRT can be significant, the overall relationship between chairs and individual faculty may undergo considerable change.

**ADVICE FROM THE FIELD: RESOURCES FOR CHAIRS**

Institutions considering implementing PTR may wish to take note of the experiences of colleagues and deans in other institutions as their own chairs accept new responsibilities. We have surveyed chairs and other administrators to determine the effects of PTR on them, on the resources they require, and on the problems they see in the process.

A surprising response from chairs was the call for a “job description.” If these descriptions do exist, they are often not provided to chairs. Faculty evaluation and specific responsibilities and author issues in the case of the “outranked” chair are elements that are of particular importance in PTR. Descriptions should include term length and policies for succession, as well as personnel issues like faculty recruitment, professional development and mentoring, and resolution of conflict. Other topics of interest are management, budget, and academic program responsibilities.

Chairs have also identified the need for formal programs to prepare them for their responsibilities in PTR since they report receiving little preparation for the process. Thus, workshops, handbooks, and other media for the distribution of information on PTR are indicated.

Experience in the inner workings of institutional processes is an important resource for chairs. For example, prior service on tenure and promotion committees has been cited as the most useful and perhaps the only directly applicable training for chairs who become involved in PTR.
COSTS AND BENEFITS OF POST-TENURE REVIEW: MIXED REACTIONS

Chairs have identified the greatest cost of post-tenure review as the time that it requires from everyone involved. In periodic PTR, some faculty spend many hours preparing extensive self-evaluations and assembling other pieces of evidence of effective performance. In initiated PTR, faculty prepare annual performance data for the review with the chair that may, in turn, trigger an in-depth review. Under these circumstances, the chair must be especially deliberate in reviewing materials, detailed and precise in responding to the faculty member, and innovative and knowledgeable about directing development activities to enhance performance.

When the time faculty spend on PTR is added to that of chairs, committees, and deans, the investment by the institution expands considerably. Because of the significant investment of time, faculty commonly express the view that the tangible benefits of the process of PTR are questionable, namely, that the evaluation process is not taken seriously. Yet, PTR does precipitate conversations between a chair and colleague about what has been accomplished since the person earned tenure, and what the person seeks to accomplish in the future. These conversations allow for improved communication between the faculty member and chair, while alerting other faculty in the department to their colleague’s professional accomplishments.

MORALE ISSUES IN POST-TENURE REVIEW

Post-tenure review can bring a high level of anxiety to the faculty member undergoing evaluation. Although tenure has already been achieved, the process can raise past concerns that may have been forgotten but which serve to add more stress to the review, regardless of current accomplishments. This is true for those who have experienced post-tenure review one or two times in the past, as well as for faculty who are just beginning their first evaluation.

The evaluation process can also adversely affect the chair’s morale, primarily because they are perceived to be the enemy, no matter how mindful they are of the words that are spoken or the decisions that are made. Clearly, reviewers must take care in planning for reviewing faculty performance, in suggesting and fostering ways to enhance performance, or in correcting serious problems. Their concern is essential for positive outcomes and for a sustained collegial atmosphere.
CAREER ISSUES AND PLANNING FOR CHANGE AFTER PTR

PTR underscores the importance of continued high performance of senior faculty, and chairs are often the academic leaders who most directly speak with these faculty about their professional successes and challenges. Understanding the predictable concerns that faculty encounter throughout the stages of their careers can help chairs anticipate challenges that may occur within their departments. And a familiarity with the various ways that senior faculty may seek to reshape their careers—by exploring new directions in teaching, service, or research, for example—can help chairs to be a positive force during the post-tenure review process. The ability to effect career transitions ties directly to the need that chairs become more aware of faculty development opportunities, and more proficient at guiding faculty through the process.

When discussing the results of a PTR with senior colleagues seeking a change in career balance, chairs may wish to:

- Emphasize developmental goals.
- Expand their flexibility to negotiate new balances among teaching, scholarship, and service for senior faculty.
- Include elements of significant peer involvement in the evaluation.
- Provide incentives and rewards for developmental activities.

Yet, the success of the PTR process is dependent upon such factors as how well faculty respond to the suggestions that are given, how receptive they are to change, and how interested they are in listening to what the chair has to say. Similarly, the chair must maintain a positive attitude and genuine interest in the review process.

CONCLUSION

These suggestions, taken together, imply that department chairs take on the roles of professional guide, career advisor, judge, and diplomat when they evaluate and talk with faculty during post-tenure review. Chairs may also be asked to justify the process of PTR or to explain its benefits. For some chairs, these roles can be new and uncomfortable. Yet, the potential professional and institutional benefits that may be the result of post-tenure review depend upon chairs’ effectiveness in adopting new roles and perspectives.
REFERENCE


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