3.7.2

Faculty: Faculty evaluation

The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

Judgment

☑ Compliance   ☐ Partial Compliance   ☐ Non-Compliance   ☐ Not Applicable

Narrative

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) has multiple ways to evaluate the performance of its faculty. The policies for evaluating faculty performance specify the criteria to be followed by the different departments at regular intervals. These policies are clearly set forth in the Faculty Handbook, which is available online and hence accessible to all faculty [1].

Faculty Evaluation Governance

According to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the term "faculty member" is limited to regular, full-time personnel whose regular assignments include instruction, research, and/or public service as a principal activity, and who hold academic rank as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor [2]. These faculty members are often referred to as ranked faculty. The authority to evaluate faculty has been delegated by the TBR to individual institutions within its jurisdiction. The office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs guides departments and colleges in implementing the processes of faculty evaluation in a way that complies with TBR guidelines and guarantees academic freedom. All the references indicated in this narrative are part of the Faculty Handbook, which is available on the University website.

Annual Faculty Evaluations

All full-time, regular faculty members, both tenured and non-tenured, are evaluated annually by the departmental chairperson and the college dean per the Annual Faculty Evaluations Procedures in the Faculty Handbook. The procedures for dealing with situations where faculty members are performing significantly below an acceptable level for extended periods of time are outlined as well [3]. The Annual Faculty Evaluation Form is used and signed by the faculty member, departmental chair, and college dean [4]. As part of the evaluation process, each faculty member is required to prepare and file a Faculty Annual Report, documenting activities and effort with respect to his or her current Agreement on Responsibilities Form [5]. The responsibilities of full-time faculty members generally include three primary functions: teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service/outreach [6] that represent the core values of the University mission. The performance of each faculty member is evaluated based on the faculty member's accomplishments in the primary areas appropriate to his or her assigned duties and responsibilities. Part-time/adjunct faculty members are evaluated each semester using a form recommended by the chairperson and approved by the dean [7]. The administrators who are teaching are evaluated by the appropriate departmental chairperson [8]. Documentation examples of completed annual evaluations for each college or school, as well as documentation examples of renewal, tenure, and promotion materials are provided [9].

Annual Evaluation of Instruction

The purpose of evaluation of instruction is to ensure that teaching and learning take place effectively across all academic units in the University. This is achieved through formal faculty evaluations, which are fairly standard across the University, with some variations among departments, depending on each department's unique mission.

Tenure-track, full-time temporary, and part-time faculty, as well as teaching assistants with grading responsibility for courses, have all of their courses evaluated every semester (with the exception of summer courses) using the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Center's student evaluation tools [10]. The results of these evaluations are reviewed at least once per year in connection with personnel actions by the chairperson and, in the case of tenure-track faculty, by the dean. This review is based on the available results of IDEA surveys and other evaluation tools appropriate to the discipline. Faculty members are expected to use the results of the course evaluations to better their instructional strategies in order to improve student learning. Administrators may also use the results of course evaluation to make informed decisions about professional development, improvement of instruction, and future teaching assignments.

For tenured faculty, two IDEA evaluations per year must be submitted. Tenured faculty who are seeking promotion must evaluate all classes for at least one semester each year for each of the previous four years or from initial appointment, whichever is the shorter period. It is up to individual departments to supplement the IDEA with other evaluation tools that may be more relevant to their particular disciplines.

Faculty Promotion and Tenure

Promotions are made objectively, equitably, impartially, and as recognition of merit in accordance with the criteria related to teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service/outreach. The policy for promotion is clearly outlined in the Faculty Handbook [11].

Recommendations for appointment or promotion begin at the departmental level, with the candidate's peers providing input after reviewing the candidate's work. The departmental/unit peers act as that segment of the wider community of scholars who are best qualified to evaluate the potential or actual performance of the candidate in the exercise of his/her professional responsibilities.

Faculty members are evaluated in the areas of teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service/outreach according to the percentages of each of these areas on the Agreement on Responsibilities [4]. Not every faculty member, though, is expected to engage in each activity to the same degree. There is a wide variation in individual academic unit missions and priorities. Even within units, faculty assignments may vary depending on faculty abilities, interests, and University needs. Because individual priorities, workloads, the level and quality of support services and facilities, disciplinary characteristics, and faculty capabilities and interests are all subject to wide variation within the University, an effective system for evaluating potential or performance must be based upon the professional judgment of the faculty members in the candidate's academic department/unit.

The policy and procedures for tenure are outlined in the Faculty Handbook [12]. Tenure is awarded only to those members of the faculty who have exhibited professional excellence and outstanding abilities sufficient to demonstrate that their future services and performances justify the degree of permanence afforded by academic tenure. The TBR does not award tenure in nonfaculty positions. Academic tenure may be awarded only to full-time faculty members who

1. hold academic rank as instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor and meet the minimum criteria for that rank as specified in TBR Policy 5:02:02:20, Section IV1
2. have been employed pursuant to tenure-track appointments and have completed a probationary period of service, and/or as agreed upon in writing and signed by the appropriate academic officer
3. have been determined by the University to meet the criteria for recommendation for tenure and have been so recommended pursuant to this policy.

The faculty member may apply for tenure at the beginning of the sixth year after completing a probationary period of not less than five years. The exceptions to this requirement are outlined in Tenure Policy Section III.E. and F. [13]. A faculty member applies for tenure only once, with no possibility of a second chance in the event that the outcome is negative.

Departmental chairs play an important role in providing feedback to assistant professors who are not yet tenured through an annual progress evaluation review. These reviews are designed to provide detailed feedback to nontenured faculty members as they progress toward tenure and promotion.

To ensure objectivity in the decision process, every recommendation for promotion or tenure that is made to a higher level administrative office in the University must be accompanied by thorough documentation that supports the candidate's teaching performance, and/or research/scholarship/creative activity, and/or service/outreach contributions. Although the areas of teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service/outreach are all considered important, certain exceptions might exist where evaluation may occur in one or the other area exclusively.

Conclusion

TBR policies are the overarching guidelines in TTU's faculty evaluation system. These guidelines are conveyed primarily through the Faculty Handbook and help achieve a standardized evaluation format across departments. Faculty, including tenure-track, full-time temporary, and part-time, and their courses are regularly reviewed in terms of merit, and promotion and tenure are granted based on the results of these evaluations and the faculty's ability to show professional excellence and outstanding abilities in his or her respective fields. Therefore, the University is in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.7.2.

Sources

[01] Faculty Handbook

[02] Definition of Faculty

[03] Policy for Annual Faculty Evaluations

[04] Annual Faculty Evaluation Form

[05] Agreement on Responsibilities Rev Spring 2015

[06] TTU Policy 203 Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

[07] Adjunct Faculty Evaluation Sample Form

[08] Administrators Teaching Evaluation Form

[09] Annual Faculty Evaluation_Renewals_Tenure_and Promotion Documentation Examples

[10] IDEA Evaluation of Instruction

[11] Faculty Promotion

[12] Tenure Procedures and Forms List

[13] Academic Tenure