

Key thoughts expressed during the faculty forum and the campus-wide forum:

1. The existing LRT policy claims that teaching is our primary value, but this is not actually rewarded in the enforcement or application of the policy.
2. There is too much weight placed on the IDEA form instead of emphasizing a variety of measures of effective teaching. What does it mean to be an effective teacher? Most faculty know it involves more than what our summative evaluations say. The policy and the university need to recognize just how much time it takes to be an effective teacher.
3. The support from the administration for faculty research (including money and equipment) is not commensurate with the high expectations for research output.
4. There is a lack of clearly defined roles for each state of the LRT process. Lower level committees should judge the quality of the faculty member's work and higher level committees should simply look to see if LRT procedures outlined in university and department policies are followed.
5. One interesting suggestion was to have the department chair, department LRT, the dean, and the college LRT all function simultaneously. The argument is that the existing policy allows the department chair to set the tone with his/her letter and the other committees just follow suit. Simultaneous reviews would force all committees to evaluate applicants individually without the influence of other reviews. The university LRT would only evaluate applicants if there was a "no" vote at any of the other levels.
6. We place an emphasis on objective measures, but there is no way to measure certain faculty activities, such as service.
7. Instruments used to measure teaching are geared toward face-to-face classes and do not function well for measuring graduate or online classes.
8. Departments are using the "uniqueness" of their own fields and accreditation issues to circumvent broader university policy.
9. One suggestion was to blow up the "Holy Trinity" of Teaching, Research, and Service in favor of a focus on student engagement and experiential learning. We would still emphasize all three of those previous categories, but filter them through the lens of how they impact student learning. Several faculty liked the idea philosophically, but worried about how it would work in practice when it came time to do annual reviews. One faculty member was concerned that we would be evaluating faculty through too narrow of a lens in only focusing on student engagement. We might miss some foundational stuff, like the basic dissemination of course content.

10. We need to take a long hard look at the forms we use in our LRT process. They aren't nearly specific enough and it's difficult for faculty to know how to document their work. This might be the reason faculty sometimes go overboard in documenting.
11. The university has access to NSSE data (National Survey of Student Engagement) and it shows we are doing very well as an institution. How can faculty use that data to support their own LRT applications?
12. We need a much clearer definition of scholarship/creative activity in the new policy. Even if it's integrated with another category (such as engagement), it's still an important focus of our university and the ambiguity is the source of conflict in some of our LRT committee meetings.
13. The goal of LRT should be to nurture and support faculty. We need to really develop the talents of our faculty members. Faculty currently see LRT as this "gotcha" process where they are punished because a select few faculty are not performing well in their jobs. Most faculty are doing excellent work.
14. We need a way to reward long-term projects. Faculty shy away from these because they don't know how to count them on their LRT applications.
15. Student feedback down the road should be incorporated into the LRT process. We need to judge faculty based on what students say after they've been out of their programs for a few years. We should also consider judging faculty as a group. How well is the department or college functioning as a whole?
16. Some faculty suggested a system where we have "tracks" in which faculty can decide if they want to emphasize teaching, research, or service more. Then, they are accountable to do exceptional work in the track that they have chosen.
17. The post-tenure review process is more rigid than at most of our other peer institutions. The Board of Regents policy only dictates that SUU have some kind of post-tenure review, but we've opted for tenured faculty to complete annual reviews and a 5 year review. This system places a heavy burden of proof on the faculty member to demonstrate that he/she is doing a good job when that burden should shift to the administration after tenure. Most faculty are in favor of removing the annual reviews and only doing a 5 year post-tenure review with some possible trigger mechanisms for more frequent reviews, but these have to be clearly laid out in policy.
18. We need to clarify the procedures for rank advancement. It's not clear what it takes to become a full professor. What is a "master teacher?"

The LRT workshop held on Tuesday, December 1st, was designed to start generating ideas for the first draft of a proposal for LRT changes. Keep in mind the nothing here is codified. These are just ideas.

LRT Purpose Statement: Focus of the tenure and rank advancement process is to develop, support, and celebrate faculty success throughout their career in alignment with the values and mission of the University.

In order to fulfill this purpose and support the values of student engagement and learning, LRT should be a formative process to ensure:

1. Transparency
2. Clarity
3. Fairness
4. Equity
5. Consistency
6. Support

Components of Faculty Work

1. Excellence in teaching is our primary mission, and requires the bulk of our faculty's time and effort. A 4,4 workload equals 90% of a faculty member's time.
2. In support of teaching, the LEAP philosophy is used as a guideline to support student engagement and learning that include teaching, traditional and non-traditional forms of scholarship/creative activities, and service to students.
3. Service to the University, profession, and community.

As a starting point, we began by looking at #1 on the proposed components of faculty work to try to sketch out some of the options available to faculty. There is a desire that faculty members be required to utilize a variety of teaching measures, but that they should have choice in how they document their teaching effectiveness.

Here are some examples of things that might go into the broader university policy and can be used to demonstrate good teaching:

1. Idea scores
2. reflective practices, and application in 250 words or less!
3. Peer evaluation of teaching and syllabi.
4. student comments and letters.
5. Professional development, and application of what was learned.
6. teaching practices inventory as a list of examples.
7. These are examples. This is not an exhaustive list. Additional items can be added with consultation with the chair of the department LRT committee.

We have yet to sketch anything out for the other areas of scholarly/creative activity and service.

Future tasks of the LRT Task Force:

1. Clarifying non-tenure, tenure, rank advancement and post-tenure review.
2. Finish clarifying the components of faculty work by offering a more comprehensive list of engagement activities, scholarly activity (including traditional and non-traditional forms of scholarship), service activities.
3. Discuss tiers versus numeric systems in a unified model of teaching, scholarship and service to students.
4. Determine the viability of using “exceptional” as a category at all. Some faculty felt it was motivating and rewarding to faculty (even when merit pay wasn’t available) and others felt like it diminished the value of achieving “standard” performance.
5. Rewrite the policy to emphasize a shift in the burden of proof post-tenure. Tenured faculty should be evaluated much less frequently and it should be presumed that they are doing good work unless demonstrated otherwise.
6. Adjusting the forms to create clarity and to possibly streamline the process making it easier for faculty and evaluators.
7. Change the timeline of the policy to create a system where LRT committees don’t function in a linear fashion, but simultaneously. This will create greater fairness in the process and allow faculty to get performance feedback in the fall instead of the spring semester.
8. Add greater transparency to the whole process so faculty know where they stand, have access to pertinent documents related their evaluation, and have some opportunity for appeal even without due process rights as untenured faculty.