


Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate, Seton Hall University

From: Karen E. Boroff, Ph.D.
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President 

Re: Interpretation of *Faculty Guide* Article 4.5.d

Date: February 27, 2018

On December 4, 2017, the Office of the Provost received an interpretation of Article 4.5.d of the *Faculty Guide* from the Faculty Senate. I write to you in response to that request, which I have given great thought and deliberation.

Before addressing the specific interpretative issue, it is significant to remember that in offering tenure and promotion, the University is making a long-term commitment to a faculty member. While a faculty member can seek a job at another institution at any point in his or her career, the University must honor its tenure and promotion commitments to a faculty member until such time as the faculty member voluntarily leaves the University. Therefore, it is essential for the faculty and administrators to take time to know a faculty member and to judge how the person works with the expectations of our departments, colleges, and the University.

This is even more true when considering the decision to promote a faculty member to the rank of Professor. Our Professors are the keepers of the values of the University. As we all appreciate, not all other institutions of higher education are like Seton Hall. In addition to our Catholic mission, we have a unique culture, particularly in the relationship between our faculty and our students, and applicants for the rank of Professor need to demonstrate that they will show leadership as to our values within our institution. When a faculty member spends time at another university, he or she may be subject to dissimilar expectations than when at Seton Hall. Another school may have different faculty loads, different class sizes, and a different balance of graduate and undergraduate courses. It is only when a faculty member has worked under the particular circumstances of Seton Hall that the University can fully judge whether that person will be capable of taking on the role of Professor here.

In recognition of these concerns, the Preamble to Article 4 of the *Faculty Guide* is very explicit. It states that “[i]n general, work performed before coming to the university is the basis for appointment, work performed after the appointment is the basis for the first promotion, and work performed after a previous promotion is the basis for the next promotion.” My understanding of

additional four years of full-time university or college teaching *performed at the University after the appointment as an Associate Professor* to be eligible to apply for the rank of Professor.

The Faculty Senate rejected this interpretation of the *Faculty Guide*, arguing instead that “Article 4.5.d established the baseline criteria making a faculty member eligible to hold the rank of professor, whereas the preamble limits the content of the portfolio that a candidate presents for evaluation as part of an application for promotion. These are different things.” I am not convinced that these are different things. But even assuming for argument’s sake that they are, the Faculty Senate’s conclusion does not follow. Article 4.5.d requires an additional four years of teaching as a baseline criterion for promotion. As the Faculty Senate’s own analysis notes, the portfolio that is presented by the candidate to satisfy this criterion is limited, under the Preamble, to work done after the initial appointment. In other words, to satisfy requirement of an additional four years of full-time college or university experience, the candidate is limited to work that was done after the appointment. Teaching done at another college or university cannot satisfy this need.

Furthermore, if we were to adopt the Faculty Senate’s interpretation it could lead to odd results. Most new probationary faculty members are appointed as Assistant Professors. Some will have had a number of years of full time teaching at another college or university before coming to Seton Hall. Under the Faculty Senate’s interpretation of the *Faculty Guide*, those Assistant Professors would be able to use that pre-Seton Hall teaching to “shorten the clock” on their time to apply for Associate Professor. After all, Article 4.5.d’s requirement of four years of full-time college or university teaching can be satisfied by teaching at another institution prior to appointment, and the same logic should apply to the exact same language in Article 4.5.c. Furthermore, because Article 3.3.j states that the standards for promotion to Associate Professor and tenure are identical, a probationary faculty member might argue that time at a prior institution should also shorten the clock to applying for tenure.

A reading that requires an additional four years of teaching at Seton Hall prior to promotion to Professor is also a wiser policy. Holding the rank of Professor is a recognition by the University that the faculty member is an exemplar of what we value in service, leadership, teaching, and scholarship. To judge appropriately whether an individual is worthy of the respect that is carried with the rank of Professors, the University needs to know whether and how the individual meets those expectations in the years after she or he is appointed as an Associate Professor. In the ordinary case, this can only be done by having the person serve for four years at Seton Hall after the initial appointment as Associate Professor, and the University should thus generally require four additional full years of teaching at Seton Hall before deciding to make the commitment.

Fortunately, the *Faculty Guide* clearly contemplates this common-sense approach to promotion and tenure eligibility. As set forth in the Preamble to Article 4, work done before appointment does not count toward promotion to Professor. While the *Faculty Guide* does not presently make it specific that the time required for promotion to Professor from Associate Professor, when the initial appointment is at Associate Professor, can be shortened by the letter of appointment, such a power is probably inherent in the authority of the Provost (as recommended by the Dean). I would suggest that we work together to make this power explicit in the *Faculty Guide*.