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# THE FACULTY VOICE

The Newsletter of the FSU Chapter, United Faculty of Florida

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## Evaluation in Our Corporate World

Peer review is the centerpiece mechanism for evaluation of the productivity of scholars in a university environment. There are many reasons why peer review is so important and central to our evaluation systems. These reasons include: (1) the complexity and diversity of scholarly efforts; (2) the need to assess the reliability and accuracy of scholarly contributions; and (3) the need to assess the impact of individual pieces of scholarship.

During the last academic year a number of promotion & tenure folders that were approved by departmental, college, and university committees were denied by action of the top levels of the administration. This action caused understandable distress to the individuals involved, their departments, and many faculty in the University. The distress ultimately led to the presentation of a paper, "Evaluation and Tenure" by the Provost (<http://www.fsu.edu/~acaffair/tenure.html>). The remainder of this column is devoted to the questions of what kinds of action can be effective in raising the standards for peer review in an institution, and what kinds of action may lead to decreasing the standards in the same institution. In looking for examples of administrative action that resulted in an increase in the standards of an institution, it isn't long before you come across the case of the University of Chicago under the new leadership of Robert M. Hutchins.

He also enthused the whole campus about a new idea for higher education. The result for Chicago was a change from being a Big-10 also-ran to being one of the premier universities in the country and the world. Hutchins' actions worked to raise the standards of the institution. The University of Chicago has gotten a significant share of the Nobel Prizes in science and economics in the last two decades.

Examples of administrative action that may decrease the academic standards of an institution include the replacement of tenure by renewable contracts, and establishment of numerical productivity quotas for promotion and tenure. A look at the institutions that use renewable contracts for their faculty will show that this group includes many trade schools and diploma mills, and none of the premier institutions of higher education in the United States or the world.

Data on institutions with productivity quotas for promotion and tenure is not easily obtained. There is an established productivity quota for tenure in the College of Arts and Sciences at Florida A&M University. This is the only such quota that we have been able to find.

A productivity quota that is above the current standard of productivity sounds like it would raise the level of productivity. It may be a surprise to learn that installation of a minimum standard often has just the opposite effect, see, e.g., W. E. Demming, *Out of the Crisis*. The standard raises the bar for the few people who were below the bar in the past, it also often lowers the bar for the many people who exceeded the previous standard. When someone has accomplished a numerical target, they have met the goal. Since we have not been able to locate a single premier institution of higher education that has a numerical standard for productivity in promotion & tenure, we must conclude that such standards apparently do not lead to excellence in scholarship. The question is, how does this discussion of numerical standards relate to the present situation at Florida State University?

### In this issue....

New UFF/FSU Officers.....	2
Grievance Corner .....	3
Bills Passed in Legislature.....	4

Hutchins threw out intercollegiate football. At the time Chicago was in the Big-10, the throwing out was not a

The Provost's discussion of these issues states "... I ... compare the numbers and types of publications to national standards. ... I consider the quality of the outlets, ... Has this person's work established an intellectual area and national or international reputation." The first statement above sounds a lot like a numerical standard to everyone who has read this document that We have talked to. When you consider the task of evaluating the work of scholars in areas as diverse as high energy physics and Elizabethan literature, a numerical standard is all that one could rely upon. Even the Provost admits, "*Of course no one person can evaluate the content in very many fields.*" Yet it is this evaluation that is at the heart of the peer review system.

The evaluation of content is essential if one is to determine if "*this person's work established an intellectual area and national or international reputation.*" The admission that a single person cannot be expected to do this reinforces the notion that a numerical standard has been the most important single criteria used. What was the numerical standard for productivity?

No one in the upper administration has said what the standard was. It has certainly been determined in those departments where candidates were approved by the department and college and turned down by the upper administration. All one needs to do is establish the numerical minimum for successful candidates, and the numerical maximum for unsuccessful ones.

National standards for productivity of Associate Professors by academic discipline are not known to us. If they were obtained, their reliability would certainly be subject to considerable debate. Where do these standards come from? It is our guess that they come from the reaches of the upper administration of this institution.

In a recent grievance arbitration at the University of West Florida the UFF position was sustained because the Provost there had denied promotion, but had not read the book that was the judged to be the foundation for the promotion folder. That case also had the appearance of involving a numerical standard in scholarship for promotion.

The peer review system works. We need to strengthen it. You can do that by joining UFF.

## **UFF/FSU Chapter Officers for 2000-2001**

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**Protect Your Rights**

**Join UFF!**

## Grievance Corner

Chris Gorsuch

The last academic year has been an active one for the grievance committee. Issues that have been addressed favorably in the past year include assignments of responsibilities, sexual discrimination, and equitable opportunities in assignments. Some of the ongoing problems include an upcoming arbitration where a tenured faculty member of the former FSU branch of the Canal Zone was not rehired at the reconstituted FSU-Panama, as well as reporting issues at the Panama City Branch campus. There were several potential grievances which were brought to informal resolution, including the establishment of a distribution for merit pay by the faculty of the Library, thus ensuring that distribution of any future merit money is done according to faculty consensus.

Coordination between the Faculty Senate grievance committee and the United Faculty of Florida grievance committee continued during this past year. Carolyn Piazza and Chris Gorsuch have been in contact several times in delineating the roles of the respective areas of interest.

Although the summer for many is a time of reflection and research, the grievance committee continues on. It is noted that many grievances filed now are the result of lack of attention to one's assignment of responsibilities. Although this document is often given cursory attention, the Assignment of Responsibility:

- Is the primary basis for one's annual performance evaluation. You cannot be evaluated upon that which you have not been assigned.
- Is an opportunity for the faculty member to interact with his/her supervisor, and to engage in positive dialogue.
- Cannot be imposed arbitrarily or unreasonably.
- Should be communicated, in writing, at the beginning of each year of employment. The standard is six (6) weeks BEFORE the assignment begins, where practicable.
- Can be changed. However, changes should be made in writing BEFORE the change occurs.
- Is a means for providing equitable opportunity for tenure and promotion.
- Should be on file in your personnel file, and a copy provided you.

Keeping these points in mind will prevent misunderstandings and miscommunications from developing. If you are unsure of what is or where is your upcoming Assignment of Responsibility, contact your supervisor, and document this. The things that are informally discussed and informally agreed upon in July or August may not be remembered by the following April!

Lastly, the grievance committee for academic year 2000/01 is being formed this summer. Grievance training will be offered early this fall semester, so that every committee member is brought up to date on changes in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. At the end of spring semester 2001, a new chair will be selected, which carries with it one unit (i.e., 25% or 1 course) release time. Anyone who is interested is urged to contact either Dan Kimel, 608 KEN, Physics Dept. (e-mail: kimel@hep.fsu.edu) or Chris Gorsuch, Library Technical Services (e-mail: cgorsuch@mail.fsu.edu).

**Bills Passed in the 2000 Legislative Session Affecting Higher Education**

**HB 2263** is the legislation with the most profound and far-reaching effect on SUS faculty and professional employees titled Florida Education Governance Reorganization Act of 2000.

The source of this bill was a constitutional amendment change providing for an appointed Board of Education and Commissioner of Education. The result-through this legislation-is a seven member super board, the Florida Board of Education, which governs all of education and is appointed by the Governor. The stated purpose, among others, is to provide "for devolution of authority to the ...institutions that are actual deliverers [sic] of educational services." It envisions an appointed Commissioner of Education and underlings appointed by and serving him, responsible to each of the education entities. In January 2003, the Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges will cease to exist. Instead, at the universities, local 9-member boards (appointed by the Governor) will be the "body corporate with all the powers of a body corporate," residing within the service area (and in the case of Florida Atlantic University, 3 residing in Broward, 3 in Palm Beach and 3 from either).

Between October 1, 2000, and the next two years, a Reorganization Transition Task Force is to make it all happen smoothly. Housed in the Governor's office and appointed by him, by the Speaker of the House and by the Senate President, this group will determine in essence whether the system remains a system or fractures Balkan-like into warring factions. To assure the swift demise of the BOR, Speaker Thrasher inserted into the appropriation bill a poisoned pill: The BOR will be defunded (see specific appropriation 178). Only an amendment by Senator Horne allows the BOR staff to continue to function, although in a weakened state, until it "sunset". The outlook for faculty is uncertain too. Should your programs, your working conditions, intellectual property rights and academic freedom be determined county by county? Do we, in Senator Meek's words, really want to "set up ten Third World juntas?"

**Finally the money: HB 2145** --The State's Appropriations for Higher Education While law enforcement -from police to judges-got substantial special pay packages, faculty in the SUS will not see a dime for performance, for merit, for market equity, or for promotions that does not come out of a measly 2.5% for nine months overall salary rate appropriated by the Legislature. The Chancellor's 20 million dollar request to move faculty salaries up didn't survive very long with a Legislature that was willing to spend millions on law and medical schools and, at one time, on four new universities without spending anything to support those who do the teaching and research.

Each university was given a 5% tuition increase with the right to spend the money on institutional priorities. If these priorities happen to be faculty salaries then there may be promotion and market equity money available from that source.

**You Can't Afford Not to Join  
Fill out the form below and return to:  
Dan Kimel, UFF/FSU President, Physics, Campus 4350**

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<b>Membership Form</b>	<b>United Faculty of Florida UFF-FTP-NEA</b>
Please Print Complete Information	Circle One
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_____	Ms    Mrs
Social Security Number	Last Name    First Name    MI
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Home Street Address	SUS Campus    Department
_____	_____
City                      State                      Zip Code	Office Phone                      Home Phone
_____	_____

**PLEASE ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED FACULTY OF FLORIDA (UFF-FEA-NEA) THROUGH PAYROLL DEDUCTION.**

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Signature

