Published on *University of Toronto Faculty Association* (https://www.utfa.org)

Report of the Chair of the Appointments Committee, 2022–2023

April 18, 2023

This Committee provides advice on all matters related to the University's appointment policies and related matters. This includes policies, procedures, and guidelines for hiring, promotion, tenure, and dismissal.

by Leslie Stewart Rose

(Mis)Alignment of Divisional Guidelines With Negotiated Policy

This year, UTFA has been actively engaged in an Association grievance to protect our members from the Administration's unilateral amendment of Divisional Guidelines on the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness that significantly alter the criteria that needs to be met during probationary and promotion reviews. On January 1, 2021, UTFA negotiated changes to several key documents (namely, the Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments ("PPAA"), the Policy and Procedures Governing & Promotions in the Teaching Stream ("PPGPTS"), and the Policy and Procedures Governing Promotions ("PPGP"). It is UTFA's understanding that academic units were instructed to amend their Divisional Guidelines in accordance with these policies. As we reviewed the revised guidelines that received provostial approval, *UTFA recognized that a number of guidelines do not align with negotiated University workload policies*.

Many of the revisions constitute a departure from negotiated policy and significantly raise the bar for tenure/continuing status and promotion. Some improperly increase the standards of performance assessment for faculty members by adding new and more demanding criteria to demonstrate 'competence' or 'excellence' in teaching. Others significantly reconfigure "what counts as teaching" (e.g., the teaching embedded in leadership or service roles). UTFA is working to bring the Divisional Guidelines in line with the applicable policies and is committed to retaining a broad scope for our members to demonstrate the quality of their teaching. We encourage members to become familiar with the aforementioned University policies and to compare them to their division's Teaching Effectiveness Guidelines.

Use of Student Evaluations in Promotion and PTR Processes

As is noted in the report of the Interim Vice-President, Grievances, UTFA is engaged in an Association grievance regarding the use of Student Evaluations of Teaching/Student Course Evaluations (SETs/SCEs) in high-stakes situations, such as promotion and Progression Through Ranks (PTR). The Appointment Committee's SETs/SCEs Working Group has been meeting to develop educational materials to help members make better sense of SETs/SCEs data. Any inclusion of SETs/SCEs in the Divisional Guideline Grievance (mentioned above) will be reconsidered when the outcome of the SETs/SCEs grievance is determined.

Part-Time Appointments Policy

The Appointments Committee has been discussing the applications of the revisions to the policy on Part-Time Appointments that came into effect on January 1, 2021. UTFA's ad hoc Part-Time Policy Working Group facilitated a fruitful discussion during the winter semester, and shared the main points at Executive and Council meetings. The Working Group will be hosting an information session for part-time UTFA members, with a dual focus on understanding the nature and impact of policy change and hearing from members with precarious part-time positions about their ongoing experiences. *Hold the date for a Part-time Policy Information Session: June 6 from 12 noon to 1:30*. Details to follow.

A New "Travel Tax"

In February 2023, the University of Toronto implemented the central "travel tax" known as the Air Travel Emissions Mitigation Initiative (ATEMI). It was announced that "[a]ll university-funded air travel charged to an operating/principal investigator Funds Center (i.e. charged to operating, PERA or research accounts without Fund #s) will be subject to a carbon offset fee based on the distance traveled and flight class of service." Learn more here. *UTFA supports initiatives to reduce the University's carbon footprint, but is concerned about the Administration taxing accounts that, for some faculty and librarians, are the only funds available to support their scholarly work*. Further, PERA is a benefit negotiated between UTFA and the Administration. The Administration should not be unilaterally reducing the value of a negotiated benefit.

Barriers to Research

In addition, as Chair of this committee, I have continued work as a member of the Barriers to Research Working Group; this group is finalizing the development of a tool to better understand the barriers to our scholarly work. I have also facilitated discussions about SETs/SCEs used in our promotions processes and how best to support the members to use them (or not).

Upcoming Information Sessions on Promotion

Each spring, UTFA political officers and staff host sessions designed to help members learn more about the procedures for promotion within the Teaching and Tenure Streams. *The Chairs of the Appointments and Teaching Stream Committees will facilitate Information Sessions on May 2, 2023 (Teaching Stream) and May 9, 2023 (Tenure Stream)*. Register here for the Teaching Stream workshop. Register here for the Tenure workshop.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the members of the Appointments Committee and its working groups for their critical and creative input on each of these files, to UTFA staff who have supported my work on this important portfolio, and to the collaborative and insightful contributions of the UTFA Executive and Council members.

Source URL (modified on Apr 1 2025):https://www.utfa.org/content/report-chair-appointments-committee-2022-2023