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Report of the Chair of the Appointments Committee, 2023–2024

April 19, 2024

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 Max Mishler

(Mis)Alignment of Divisional Guidelines With Negotiated Policy

The Appointments Committee advises Council and Executive on all matters related to the University's policies on appointments. This includes procedures for hiring, promotion, tenure and termination. We also consult and collaborate with the Teaching Stream Committee, the Librarians Committee, and the ad hoc Committee on Part-Time Faculty.

Another one of our main objectives during the 2023-24 academic year has been to finalize and distribute two surveys concerning "Institutional Barriers to Research" and "Teaching Evaluations." The Barriers to Research survey instrument is now complete — thanks to a tremendous amount of work done by numerous colleagues — and will be sent to Tenure Stream, Teaching Stream, and Librarian members shortly. The goal of the survey is to ascertain the various institutional barriers to conducting academic research that exist for faculty and librarians at one of the top research universities in the world. The Teaching Evaluations survey, which is still in development, will query the pedagogical usefulness of teaching evaluations, the degree to which said evaluations should be used in considering promotion and PTR, and whether evaluations should belong to individual educators or the administration. The ultimate goal of both surveys is to help UTFA to better understand working conditions at the University and to advocate on behalf of our members.

One of the principal responsibilities of the Appointments Committee is facilitating an annual workshop on Tenure and Promotion. We will be conducting this workshop on May 6, 2024. Please register here. This

workshop will involve presentations from outside legal counsel, UTFA leadership, and colleagues. In addition to communicating the specific rights and obligations of our members, this workshop can be an opportunity to build community and collectively envision a more equitable University. Based on feedback from current and previous members of the Appointments Committee, we are also developing a separate workshop on promotion to Full Professor in both the Tenure and Teaching Stream, as colleagues have reported a lack of clarity in this area due to significant variation among divisions and departments, and potentially creating a database of successful tenure files that can provide a model for pre-tenure colleagues. It is important to remember that the University of Toronto Administration expects that most continuing faculty members will secure promotion to 'Full' over the course of their careers. UTFA can play a significant role in ensuring this is a transparent and equitable process.

Last, but not least, our Committee discussed the disturbing expansion of precarious, part-time employment at the University of Toronto. We are concerned both about the conditions of work for these UTFA members and about the long-term effect this phenomenon may have on the conditions of work for all UTFA members. One specific concern raised in these conversations was the lack of academic freedom for part-time faculty. Ultimately, it is important that all UTFA members stand together if we hope to secure improved working conditions and to ensure UTFA members have a meaningful say in University governance.

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