

CAFT Sub-committee Recommendations on the Electronic Review of Tenure, Promotion and Periodic Performance Evaluation Materials.

The Rowdy Space Sub-committee of the Academic Senate has the following recommendations regarding the electronic review of materials during the Promotion and Tenure, and Periodic Performance Evaluation (PPE) processes. Although some faculty members have expressed a desire to return to the paper procedure, many people appreciated the convenience of the electronic process. The committee feels that being able to review materials from a remote location, without time limitations, is a significant benefit of the electronic approach, as is the savings in paper. We would like however to address two concerns that arose during the process in the past year, and to make some suggestions for their resolution.

1) Concerns about the Privacy of Documents in Rowdy Space

As the system is currently configured, people are able to download and/or print materials while reviewing them. This raised concerns about the protection and use of such materials, and faculty were asked by the Provost's office, not to do so. The committee suggests that the feasibility of electronically blocking such material be explored at the University level.

However, the committee also agreed with faculty members who argued that it is hard to review and compare certain types of materials online, and therefore recommends that departments be allowed to determine their own policy for the limited printing of materials for preferential review. Such a policy would be governed by a usage agreement, stating that all printed materials be shredded, at the department level, at the conclusion of the process.

2) Electronic Monitoring of File Review and Usage

Under the current system it is possible for interested parties to track whether electronic files are opened by an individual faculty member. The committee does not however, view this as an accurate estimate of whether a faculty member reviewed a case responsibly. In many departments reviews are done collaboratively, or by sub-committees. During such meetings laptops are routinely used to share information, without everyone having to open a document under their own password. In addition, many tenure files contain hundreds of documents. While not looking at an entire file might be a cause for concern, selectively looking at articles, surveys, and memos was a common practice, well before the process went electronic.

The committee is further concerned about the legal ramifications of using such data. It would appear that Faculty, Chairs, Deans or other Administrators who were not happy with a decision might all be tempted to interpret the meaning of such usage information to support their own cases, in the absence of objective proof of whether people were or were not actually exposed to the material in multiple ways. Therefore, it is our recommendation that the tracking function be disconnected, and barred from use in the process. Given the importance of Promotion, Tenure, and PPE decisions, departments should be holding their faculty to high standards for reviewing and making decisions about their colleagues' future, without using electronic means which are open to misinterpretation.

