

Joint statement on current discussions of criteria for teaching, scholarship, and service and how these discussions relate to future contract negotiations

September 19, 2012

Some faculty and departments have asked both the FSA and UFV administrators about the current departmental discussions of “criteria” and expectations concerning teaching, service, and scholarship, and how these discussions relate to contract negotiations, specifically the bargaining of a possible system of tenure and faculty ranking. In order to provide some clarification, the FSA Executive and Management are jointly issuing this communication.

The fact that conversations about both Rank and Tenure **and** about Criteria are occurring simultaneously can seem somewhat confusing. Further, there is a confluence of other pressures and initiatives: the Ministry of Advanced Education has introduced pressures for “quality assurance,” and UFV is engaged in the process of developing and publishing institutional “Learning Outcomes.” Even the various program reviews are requiring discussions of what the expectations and outcomes are within departments. All of these initiatives may involve discussions of criteria for measuring what is expected and/or what the “best practices” are for teaching, service and scholarship. All of these initiatives and discussions can tend to become mixed and muddled so that faculty are unsure of what use will be made of their deliberations.

The FSA, in all recent communications with faculty regarding both rank and tenure, has emphasized that the FSA is not charged with developing criteria that would eventually be used either for tenure or for promotion. Those criteria should originate at the department level, and should reflect the values and expectations of the academic disciplines; they should also be based on the description of faculty work as outlined in Articles 18 and 19 of the Collective Agreement. What would be decided in the course of bargaining (which would then have to be ratified by both parties, and would therefore be subject to faculty vote) would be structures and processes to make certain that criteria are applied fairly and equitably. The FSA’s role would thus be to negotiate transparent and fair timelines, composition of promotion and tenure committees, appeals processes, and the like.

It is important to emphasize that neither management nor the union can establish the criteria on which faculty would ultimately be assessed for successful completion of tenure or for promotion, should these systems be put in place. Nor can either management or the union impose criteria. Criteria themselves would fall under the auspices of the departments, faculty councils, and the Senate.

Discussions of both potential criteria and of rank and tenure will be proceeding in a parallel fashion, but where and when do these discussions intersect? Perhaps negotiations on tenure and rank will proceed smoothly and come to faculty and the Board for ratification just as the criteria decided on at the department and faculty levels are ready to come forward to the Senate for approval. Such timing would represent an ideal convergence. If, for some reason, a system of rank and tenure is not successfully bargained in this round of negotiations, then presumably criteria would be ready to go forward at some future point. In the meantime, we hope that these discussions may have intrinsic value for departments and faculties.

Both the FSA and the UFV administration would encourage faculty to continue in these discussions, being mindful of who we are as an incredibly diverse institution, and of the workload demands on our faculty. In all discussions of criteria, UFV will respect the primary importance of teaching; the value of research and scholarship and their relationship to teaching; the diversity of both teaching and research and scholarship among our various disciplines; and the value of a wide range of service.

Eric Davis
Provost and Vice-President, Academic

Virginia Cooke
President, Faculty and Staff Association