

Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion
Report to the Faculty Council
May 28, 2014

Committee Membership

During the 2013-14 academic year, the following individuals served on the Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion (RTP): Doris Donnelly (TRS), Julia Karolle-Berg (CMLC), Dan Kilbride (HS), Linda Koch (AH, representative from the Committee on Gender and Diversity), Paul Murphy (MML), Mark Waner (CH) and Tom Zlatoper (EC/FN, RTP Committee Chair).

Counting of Time Served at Rank of Instructor or Higher Towards Tenure

According to prior practice at JCU, whether or not years in a visiting position or years at other institutions were to be counted in the probationary period on the tenure track was negotiable. The Provost and Academic Vice President and the Chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee provided an October 2012 interpretation on the following question—Do all years served at the rank of instructor or higher with the status of visitor count as probationary years in service toward the automatic conferral of tenure on any faculty member who enters their eighth year of full-time service? Their interpretation was that, according to the Faculty Handbook, the answer is “yes.” In the 2012-13 academic year, the RTP Committee expressed concern that the change in practice required by the interpretation is not in the best interests of the faculty or the University and made some preliminary investigations regarding possible changes.

During the 2013-14 academic year, the RTP Committee continued its investigation. It pursued crafting a potential Faculty Handbook amendment that would allow for exceptions to the October 2012 interpretation. To inform its deliberations, the Committee examined how other Jesuit institutions count prior service towards tenure. It also considered the AAUP position on the matter articulated in the 1978 statement “On Crediting Prior Service Elsewhere as Part of the Probationary Period.”

The Committee drafted a potential amendment and met with two representatives of the AAUP Chapter at JCU—Robert Kolesar (HS) and Patrick Mooney (PL)—to obtain their feedback. The AAUP representatives indicated that the proposed amendment, as formulated, would not be allowable since it modifies a direct quotation from the 1940 AAUP statement. However, they noted that, consistent with the AAUP position, a case can be made for extending the tenure clock if significantly different circumstances in the candidate’s past warrant more time (e.g., taking a tenure-track position at an institution emphasizing research after being a faculty member at a community college). While willing to provide feedback on another draft of a broad-based amendment to the Faculty Handbook on the treatment of prior service, they indicated that such an amendment may be unnecessary if full-time visiting faculty at JCU are afforded all of the same privileges of regular full-time faculty (e.g., course-load reductions for research, opportunity to apply for university-provided research monies) or if department tenure guidelines are modified to place more importance on teaching.

The RTP Committee discussed whether to reformulate a proposed Faculty Handbook amendment during the current academic year to forward to the Faculty Council. Since there was agreement that the issue is more complicated than was hoped, it was decided not to immediately draft a new proposal but to revisit the matter during the 2014-15 academic year.