# Appendix D. Proposed Changes in the University of Southern Mississippi Faculty Handbook

**Proposed by the Academic Structure and Evaluations Committee**

In this document, we first list some general observations and principles, then changes by chapter in the current faculty handbook, and finally a list of questions and issues we felt merited further discussion by the individuals and groups authorized to make changes.

## General observations:

The spirit of the proposed changes is twofold. First: make the handbook easier to use. This was done by editing the information to make it more concise and directly relevant to faculty. Second: reduce the potential for conflicting information both within the handbook and between university documents. This was done in some cases by consolidating topics covered in multiple chapters in the current handbook, moving some information to the Employee Handbook alone, and referencing policies housed elsewhere rather than reproduce them in the Faculty Handbook in their entireties.

We have diligently avoided making changes that would substantively change policy, as opposed to those we felt would make policy clearer. We have incorporated the changes from the initiatives emerging from the reorganization process, however.

When appropriate, we changed departments and department chairs to schools and school directors.

## Observations about terminology

The current faculty handbook uses the term "academic staff" in a way that conflicted with how the term was used in the University more generally and specifically by the Provost during the reorganization process. The Provost used the term to refer to staff working in academic offices, for example, administrative assistants. Furthermore, the new Employee Handbook definition of the term "staff" excludes faculty. The faculty handbook used "academic staff" inconsistently but the term either meant "faculty" or was a catchall term to encompass both faculty and people with faculty-like functions who are not technically members of the faculty (e.g. adjuncts). We have used the term "academic personnel" in lieu of "academic staff" as the broad term to avoid this confusion. At the same time, we have tried to be more precise in using more specific vocabulary when not all academic personnel would be intended. For example, the promotion chapter of the current handbook uses the word "academic staff," when really the chapter only pertains to tenure-track faculty (promotion of non-tenure track faculty having been dealt with in the current faculty handbook Chapter 3).

Throughout, we have tried to make mention of specific numbers of days, (e.g., faculty members must be notified of such and such within 10 days) in terms "working days" rather than simply "days" or "business days". In some places the handbook was specific (e.g. 5 business days) and in others it was not (e.g. 5 days). However, IHL policy on appealing promotion and tenure speaks simply of "30 thirty days" to appeal decisions. We changed this to 30 *calendar* days, since elsewhere IHL uses the "working days" phrase and we infer that they mean calendar days, basically a month.

Generally, we refer to "the University" rather than "Southern Miss" or "The University of Southern Mississippi".

## Questions of formatting and style

The capitalization rules: we capitalize specific offices, (e.g., the President) but not roles that can be multiply occupied, (e.g., deans and school directors). The same is true for committees: if there is only

one, it is capitalized but if there are many of them (school faculty evaluation committees) we do not capitalize. We opted for a more restrictive capitalization policy because many pages became almost unreadable as all that jumped out were the capitalized positions, ranks, and generic committees.

We use Oxford commas throughout and two spaces between sentences for clarity and readability.

The formatting has been done using a master template attached to the document. Sections are identified by using the appropriate heading level in Word's style menu (e.g. chapter titles are heading 1, 1.1 is heading 2…) so that they will appear in the table of contents properly. When the table of contents is updated, the page numbers will also automatically update. New sections will appear, and old disappear, in the table of contents if the headings styles have been applied properly.

References within the text to other sections of the handbook are done with Word's cross-referencing tool, including automatic reference to "above" or "below" when pertinent, so that the reference fields will correct if the section numbers or placement are changed. To refresh all fields simultaneously (including the table of contents), highlight the entire document (ctrl A) and press F9.

The dates on the cover page need to be changed separately from the fields in the bulk of the document. If you choose the date on the calendar (which appears if you click in the field) of either the year or the more specific last-edited date, it will update in both places.

## Specific changes by chapter

In this list, chapter numbers refer to the current faculty handbook, unless specified as "new"

- Chapter 1 (University Governance) and 2 (University Organization) were combined in the new draft to create a new chapter 1 called "Academic Structure and Governance"
- Chapter 1: Descriptions were shortened to describe entities and positions as they are relevant to faculty, without endeavoring to be comprehensive. For example, the current Chapter 1 reproduces a great deal of information on the Board of Trustees that faculty can find on the IHL website once they know how it is relevant.
- Chapter 2: Only those elements of university organization and governance most directly relevant to faculty were included. For example, Chapter two was not a comprehensive list of the entirety of university organization and yet included some positions that faculty are unlikely to consult the handbook about. The current handbook reproduces sections of the by-laws of some committees to a degree we felt was not necessary. Reproducing by-laws in the handbook is cumbersome and likely to lead to inconsistencies over time.
- Chapter 3 on hiring policies, contracts, and employment terms was greatly condensed in the new Chapter 2 (Faculty Defined)
  - Specific information on contracts and hiring was deemed more appropriate for the employee handbook
  - The discussion of different kinds of faculty was made more concise and reorganized to emphasize the logic of the major distinctions among faculty that impact rights and responsibilities.
  - An effort was made to reduce conflicting and confusing terminology. For example, "academic staff" was sometimes used to refer to faculty while in other contexts at USM it referred to (non-faculty) staff working in academic offices.
  - Information on ancillary agreements was moved to the new Chapter 3 on faculty responsibilities.
  - The current Chapter 3 includes the entirety of the policy that created non-tenure track faculty positions, including references to "see Faculty Handbook" (e.g. p. 24). We divided the content into the relevant chapters, leaving a description of the positions in the new Chapter 2 but moving policies regarding promotion to the chapter on promotion, for example.

- o Moved the material on non-renewal of contracts to new chapter 6 with the other ways we might end up losing our jobs.
- Chapter 4 (Instructional Policies and Support Services) was expanded to be about faculty responsibilities more generally. The proposed handbook draft has it in the new Chapter 3 (Faculty Responsibilities). Support services belong in the new Chapter 8 on resources, but there aren't any in Chapter 4 despite the title's promise.
- Chapter 5 (research policies and support services) was divided between new Chapters 3 (responsibilities) and 8 (resources).
  - o The policies were condensed and referenced to make the handbook more usable and reduce the potential for future contradictions as policies change.
  - o Support services were expanded to include other resources available to faculty, not just research. We include services for students that faculty should know about.
  - o Specifically deleted: 5.1 (intro); 5.4 section on Office of Institutional Research; 5.5, as links to ORA, IRB and IACUC occur in Chapter 3; 5.6.5 (Patents and Copyrights) and 5.6.6 (Disclosure of Inventions), because superseded by Chapter 3 link to Intellectual Property Policy.
  - o Greatly compressed with web links added: 5.2 (Mississippi Research Consortium), 5.6 section on Research Policies (5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.3, 5.6.4) replaced by reference to ORA policies in Chapter 3; 5.4 reference to Foundation replaced by link in Chapter 8.
- Chapter 6 (faculty development opportunities) was folded into the new chapter 8 on faculty resources.
  - o "Leave for graduate or postdoctoral study" and "leave for enhancing academic credentials" are separated in the current handbook. We decided that graduate and post-graduate study are examples of ways members of the corps of instruction might enhance academic credentials, rather than a separate category of leave, and combined 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.
  - o As recommended by Allison Gillespie, removed details regarding the Academic Leave Application process and procedures, replaced by reference to Provost's website.
  - o As recommended by Allison Gillespie, removed much of the policy and procedure discussion concerning faculty sabbaticals.
- Chapter 7 (academic freedom, responsibility, and ethics) was moved to the new Chapter 3 on faculty responsibilities
- Chapter 8 (faculty evaluation procedures) became new Chapter 4
  - o Removed tenure from this chapter
  - o Moved non-tenure track to this chapter from Chapter 3
  - o Changed to reflect Initiative 1 of the reorganization
  - o An issue form 8.4.7 not explicitly addressed in the Initiatives is term length and periodic review of chairs/directors. Is that to stay the same as described in 8.4.7? It is not addressed in the draft we are submitting.
- Chapter 9 (promotion and award of tenure) became new Chapter 5
  - o Moved non-tenure track promotion here from Chapter 3
  - o Changed to reflect the contents of Initiative 2 from the reorganization. Most of the language is from the initiative and any changes in policy are from that. We went through the chapter, however, to identify anything that was not addressed in the initiative and incorporated it into the new draft.
  - o Referenced the process on Provost's website for submitting electronically in lieu of the written instructions submitted to departments and submission of dossiers to department chairs that are included in the current handbook.
- Chapter 10 (termination of employment): in new Chapter 6, combined with discipline policies
  - o Moved the paragraph in 10.2.4 that explains how the ombudsmen are chosen out of "ombudsman review" section of termination of employment to the new Chapter 1.
- Chapter 11 (scholarly misconduct proceedings) moved to new chapter 6

- Chapter 12 (faculty grievance proceedings) in new Chapter 7 along with appeals processes that were in other chapters
- Chapter 13 (board appeals): included in the appeals processes (new Chapter 7)
- Appendices: we propose that the bylaws of the handbook committee, like those of other committees, do not need to be in the faculty handbook but instead can be housed on the webpage of the Committee on Committees.

## Suggestions and observations:

Here chapter and section numbers will refer to the proposed handbook draft, unless the current handbook is specified. Addressing concerns and questions regarding the UAC, CAC, and chapters 4 and 5 should be made a priority.

- Chapter 1:
  - Since there is no longer a College or University Advisory Committee and instead College and University Promotion and Tenure Committees will review promotion, tenure, and pre-tenure dossiers, the other functions of the CAC and UAC need to be addressed. (e.g. 1.8.7)
  - 1.12 on procedural rules: this came from the current chapter 8 on faculty evaluations (8.2.9), although it seems more broadly applicable. The section on absentee voting says the vote needs to be submitted in a sealed envelope. Discuss if this is necessary.
  - 1.9.2 the Dean's Advisory Council: the numbers come from Initiative 4, but the wording limits colleges to at most 16 schools. Is this intentional?
  - 1.10.2 Initiative1 specifies that eligibility for service on the FEC is tied to faculty evaluation ratings in the year prior. We do not know how this can be done without violating confidentiality. It also says that this "generally should" be true, which implies that there may be exceptions without making clear the circumstances warranting the exception.
  - Initiative 8 deals with school governance, but has not yet been approved. The language in the handbook draft may need to be changed (e.g. program coordinator vs leads) or other information added when it is finalized. Associate school directors may also need to be addressed.
- Chapter 2:
  - The section on hiring faculty should be closely scrutinized to be sure that important points are addressed in the faculty hiring toolkit.
  - For example, current handbook 3.8.4 says that there is a "general rule of not employing persons who have earned their terminal degrees from the University in the full-time instructional ranks....". Is this in fact a **rule**? The faculty credentialing manual and hiring toolkit do not mention this policy. Nor is it mentioned in the Employee Handbook.
- Chapter 4 on faculty evaluation
  - Initiative #1 discusses grievance procedures for faculty evaluations, but these are inconsistent with grievance procedures in the old Handbook, which include annual evaluations as items that may be contested under the grievance process. The two processes are inconsistent. The same inconsistency applies to "teaching assignments" mentioned in old grievance procedures descriptions, but that also pertain to Initiative #1 insofar as a teaching assignment is a workload issue.
  - Appendices from Initiative #1 presumably need to "live" somewhere, but we're not sure where. Maybe on a new Faculty Handbook? The Provost's website is getting crowded.
  - The Faculty Evaluation Procedures chapter in the old Handbook has a long discussion about evaluation committee membership for the libraries (8.3.1b). We have left that out, having seen nothing about it in Initiative #1.
  - Initiative 1 is not clear about whether the evaluative report comes before or after the first of the two meetings with the director/committee. We have written it as before. Initiative 1 does not specify when the faculty member signs the evaluative report. We have put it in the

meeting based on our assumption that the report is given to the faculty before the first meeting. If this is not true, it needs to be changed also. Current practice seems to vary by legacy department or school regarding whether the written evaluation comes before or after the annual evaluation meeting.

- o In 4.4.1, the initiative said that all academic personnel submit an annual activity report. This many need clarification regarding who needs to do this, since administrators are also typically members of the faculty. For example, do deans submit activity reports?
- o In 4.5.4, "a second consecutive assignment of does not meet expectations in one of the three categories" is ambiguous. Is it a second consecutive assignment in the same category or in any category? We assume the former is intended, but it should be clarified.
- o Regarding 4.4.1 (p. 21), we don't say anything regarding Faculty Leads or Program Leads. If they are included in an approved Initiative #8, they should perhaps be discussion somewhere in the Handbook.

- Chapter 5 on promotion and tenure
    - o The current handbook stipulates that the chair of the department promotion and tenure committee signs the letter on behalf of the faculty. It does not stipulate this for the college level or the university level. In practice it seems that sometimes letters are signed by everyone on the committees and sometimes by just the chair.
    - o At every level except the UAC, recommendations are sent to each of the evaluative levels that precede it. However, the UAC forwards a copy of the letter to the applicant only (current handbook section 9.9.2). Is this inconsistency intentional? (new draft section 5.8)
    - o On page 99 of the current handbook, in section 9.7.2 regarding pre-tenure review the following sentence appears: "Although tenure candidates are not entitled to appear before departmental tenure committees, the committees may, at their discretion, request that parties being assessed appear before them. Departmental tenure committees conducting pre-tenure reviews may consider any matter related to tenure policies…" The sentence about candidates for tenure appearing before the tenure committee seems misplaced here. It also is not addressed elsewhere. If that is an important point and really true, it should be added in to the section on the tenure process at the school level. Does it also apply to promotion cases?
    - o There is no policy regarding promotion of clinical and research faculty in initiative 2. The paragraph on it in new 5.3.1 comes from the current handbook page 21, section 4.4.A. It says that they are not evaluated by the University Advisory Committee.
    - o Current handbook 9.3.3 says "The President is advised on personnel recommendations by the administrative heads of the University's academic units, the Provost, the University Advisory Committee, the college deans, the College Advisory Committees, the Vice President for Research, General Counsel, and by the other vice presidents in matters that are within their administrative jurisdiction." We first split this into two sentences to separate the people who do advise from those who may advise. The latter should be evaluated.
    - o Sec. 5.2, in discussion of negative pre-tenure reviews, references "upon the recommendation of the Provost and the Vice President for Research." It seems in practice, however, that the VPR is not involved, and this should be changed (although we didn't change it).
    - o The old deferral policy (current handbook 9.6.6) permits deferral of tenure to the 7th year or later while the initiative only permits a one-year extension. Should it be the more expansive time? A second question is whether the extension needs to be requested prior to submission of the application. Third, the handbook should address whether extensions are permitted for third-year review.
    - o The current handbook has it that department chairs may participate in departmental promotion and tenure proceedings only if approved by secret ballot of departmental committee. Should that stay the same now, substituting schools for departments and school directors for chairs, See also 9.5.2, current handbook. If school directors can be invited, it should be added to 1.10.1.

- Chapter 6: on being disciplined or losing your job
  - The current handbook treats non-renewal of contracts and termination separately. However, it seems that perhaps non-renewal is one form of termination and is dealt with there. We have left non-renewal from current handbook 3.11.6 in this new chapter but suggest that, with legal consent, it might be subsumed under termination.
  - The current handbook has non-renewal in chapter 3 and termination in chapter 10. Chapter 3 is a little confusing because 3.11.6 makes clear that tenured faculty are subject to non-renewal, but in 3.11.7 defines non-renewal as "the decision not to renew the existing employment contract of non-tenured faculty members."
  - 3.11.6 also says that non-tenured faculty "shall not be considered renewed until approved by the Board…and the faculty member has received written notification." We are not sure this is done. Perhaps what is intended is non-tenure track? If so, that needs to be changed.
  - Current chapter 10 was a little puzzling because the same reasons for losing employment as non-renewal are included in 10.1.1; these are financial exigencies, suspension of programs, and such—things that are not the employee's fault. The bulk of chapter on termination has to do with the process in place for faculty who are in termination procedures due to their own actions. The difference between non-renewal and termination could be made clearer. We came to the conclusion that non-renewal is loss of employment at the end of a contract period through no fault of the employee and that termination is either through the employee's fault or in mid-contract period.
- Chapter 7: grievances and appeals
  - It is necessary to address what replaces the College and University Advisory Committees for functions other than tenure and promotion. We suggest that it should be a different committee from promotion and tenure to avoid the danger that a grievance might bias committee members against a tenure or promotion.
  - 7.2.3 All of this needs to be reconsidered in light of the change of college and university advisory committees to promotion and tenure committees. IHL by laws 405.02 provide for a University Grievance Committee for non-faculty. Perhaps there should be something comparable for faculty.
  - Clarify the process at the school level. The current handbook has the initial appeal/grievance going to either the chair of the personnel committee or the department chair. One possible suggestion is that the policy be that faculty submit their claim to the school director who tries to resolve it informally and then takes it to the school personnel committee if the case is not resolved through an informal discussion between the director and faculty.
- Chapters 6 and 7 (discipline, termination, grievances): in many cases, the Handbook refers to notification happening by "certified mail". We've left those in, because it is a substantive policy question, but recommend other forms of written notification be considered.
- Chapter 8: Section on "Academic and Other Leaves of Absence" (old chapter 5) should be examined
  - It is not clear what the "other" leaves are. The section seems to create a distinction between sabbaticals and other academic leaves of absence. On the other hand, perhaps "professional leave" is not necessarily academic, although it is listed as a type of academic leave.
  - Review the process for applying for non-sabbatical academic leave. Is it necessary to have two processes, one for sabbatical and one for other leaves? The process for non-sabbatical academic leave in the handbook appears to be identical with that for sabbaticals on the Provost's website except that the former does not specify what should be included in the application and it may be reviewed by an Academic Leave Committee instead of a Sabbatical Committee. Perhaps these could be a single committee and it could be a single process. The only change we made to the process in the handbook was to change departments to schools and chairs to directors.

- In the resources chapter, should we mention Arts Institute of Mississippi (AIM), housed in CAS? How about Partners for the Arts?
  - Having included Summer Grants for Instructional Improvement and the Awards of Excellence, how about Lucas Endowment, Nina Bell Suggs? HEADWAE?
  - How about including the ACUE Faculty Development Institute – it could go with CFD or with awards. Completion of ACUE Institute earns a USM designation of "ACUE Distinguished Teaching Scholar".
- Multiple chapters: typically, we speak of "research, scholarship, and creative activity," although sometimes the initiative language included also librarianship. We suggest a new label, for example, "professional activity," to encompass "research, scholarship, creative activity and librarianship" (RSCAL?). This could be less clunky, more consistent, and inclusive. If such a category is created, it could be defined in the chapter on faculty responsibilities.
- Appendices A, B, and C: These three appendices are taken directly from Initiative 1. However, some of the material seems redundant because it is already addressed in the relevant chapters. This is particularly true with regards to Appendix A on workload. **We do not believe either of these appendices B and C belong in the handbook.**
- **Appendix D: is only included for the purpose of reviewing the initiative and should be removed from the handbook. We hope that is obvious.**