Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Department Heads

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1. GENERAL

The head of a department is the leader of a community of scholars and represents the department to the college and university administration. The head is also the department's chief administrative officer, representing the administration to the department and bearing responsibility for the pursuit and maintenance of excellence in that department. The selection and evaluation of department heads should therefore involve the widest and deepest faculty participation and the fullest exchange of ideas between faculty and administrators consistent with the requirements for sound management, flexibility, and the maintenance of proper standards in the operation of the department.

2. PRINCIPLE GUIDELINES

2.1 The fundamental principles guiding the prescriptions contained in this document are:

2.1.1 The administrative officers responsible for each appointment must determine faculty sentiment concerning incumbent and prospective department heads, and they must seriously take such sentiment into account.

2.1.2 Mechanisms for accurately gauging faculty opinions are essential. A decision contrary to the expressed wishes of a majority of the faculty of the affected department requires a compelling reason.

2.1.3 In a system where the ultimate authority to select department heads is vested in the higher administration, specific methods of including broad faculty participation in the process will enhance the institution's reputation, aid in recruiting the best faculty, promote a positive relationship between the faculty and the university administration, and ensure that all levels of the university function effectively.

2.1.4 For the purposes of this document, "faculty" shall mean those eligible to vote for members of the Faculty Senate.

3. SELECTION

3.1 When a vacancy occurs or is imminent, a search committee shall be
established and the search for a new permanent head shall begin promptly. If necessary, the dean may appointment an interim head for a maximum period of one year. The dean may appoint, or reappoint, an interim head only after giving the department’s faculty an opportunity to evaluate the candidates, through a process involving the procedural safeguards of a formal vote (see 3.5.3 to Faculty Senate Voting Provisions). Each faculty member shall be asked to vote on a candidate from a slate that has been approved by the dean. The faculty should have an opportunity to nominate candidates for this slate.

3.2 The size and precise makeup of the search committee will vary according to circumstances, but the following two principles are fundamental:

3.2.1 A majority of the members must be faculty members of the department concerned. Other constituencies that might be represented include (but are not limited to) faculty from other departments, technical staff, students, relevant agencies, and various university programs.

3.2.2 A majority of the faculty representatives from the department concerned must be elected by the faculty of that department. The dean may appoint additional members to assure broad representation of groups within the department.

3.3 Although these provisions allow the elected faculty membership to be as small as 25 percent, in most cases the proportion should be significantly larger.

3.4 During the search of suitable candidates:

3.4.1 The search committee shall take into account the rights of the individual candidates and the laws of Texas concerning open records. Vitae and all other non-confidential material shall be made available for examination by the faculty.

3.4.2 All faculty members of the department shall have an opportunity to meet with the leading candidates.

3.4.3 The department's faculty shall be given adequate time to consider the candidates.

3.4.4 They shall also have the opportunity to give evaluations of the candidates to the committee in person or in writing.

3.5 Before reporting to the dean, the committee shall give the faculty an opportunity to evaluate the leading candidates, through a process involving the procedural safeguards of a formal vote. Each faculty member shall be asked to:
3.5.1 rank the candidates, and

3.5.2 indicate any candidates who are acceptable/unacceptable.

3.5.3 Faculty shall be given at least one week to vote. Voting will be by secret ballot. Secret ballots will be provided. Faculty can vote by alternative means if they desire. The ballots shall be collected by a person identified by the search committee. Ballots will be kept in a secure place, and measures will be taken to ensure that each eligible faculty member votes at most once.

At a minimum, the chair of the search committee and the Dean of Faculties shall be present while the votes are counted.

The numeric results of the vote shall be reported to the faculty within one week of the end of the balloting period.

The ballots shall be kept in the Dean of Faculties’ office for the following three years.

3.6 Each faculty member shall also be encouraged to provide a brief rationale for his or her ranking and provide a brief explanation for citing some candidates as unacceptable. (If only one candidate is under consideration, the evaluation should be conducted in a spirit similar to that of the review of an incumbent head. The committee shall meet with the faculty to report the results of this poll. The dean, the Dean of Faculties, and the Provost shall also be informed of the results.)
3.7 The committee shall deliver a report to the dean (orally or in writing, as appropriate) describing the strengths and weaknesses of each leading and acceptable candidate and providing a committee recommendation. At the committee's discretion, the recommendation may include a ranking.

3.8 The dean, in consultation with the higher administration and the directors of relevant agencies (consistent with their own evaluations of the candidates' acceptability), shall attempt to appoint a new head from the list of leading candidates.

3.9 The dean shall provide to the committee an explanation of the action taken on its report. If no acceptable appointment can be made from the list, the search process and above procedures shall be repeated. Under no circumstances shall an appointment of a permanent head be made before the person has been recommended by a search committee and the faculty has been given the opportunities provided in this rule.

4. EVALUATION AND RETENTION

4.1 The normal tenure in office of a department head shall be from four to ten years.

4.1.1 A definite term of appointment may be negotiated with a particular candidate (but without any guarantee inconsistent with the provisions of this rule).

4.1.2 Although there is no strict upper limit on the length of service, an unusually strong case must be made to continue a head in office beyond ten years.

4.2 The department head serves with the approval of the faculty, dean, Executive Vice President and Provost, and President (and the concurrence of relevant agency directors), with advice from other interested parties. The head may be removed from office for unsatisfactory performance of duties. One reason for such dismissal is unacceptability to the faculty, as determined by the review procedure described below.

4.2.1 The faculty of each department shall periodically have an opportunity to evaluate their head and to convey their opinions and related facts to the dean (including, but not limited to, their opinions as to whether the head should continue in office).

4.2.2 The exact timing of formal reviews may vary according to circumstances, but at a minimum such a review should occur during the second and fourth years of a head's service and at least once every four years thereafter. The
review shall be conducted in a timely fashion. (Heads who are incumbent when this document is adopted shall be reviewed within two years after adoption.)

4.3 The exact format of a review may vary but must include the following:

4.3.1 an opportunity for faculty members to present (in confidence) their views, and the reasons for them, to the dean or to a committee which will report to the dean;

4.3.2 a poll of the department's faculty on whether the head should continue in office with the results transmitted to the dean or designated committee, the Dean of Faculties, and the Executive Vice President and Provost.

4.4 The dean (and other concerned administrative officers) may also seek input from other interested constituencies.

4.5 Department heads are encouraged, at this or other times, to solicit from the faculty in confidence their opinions on the organization, policies, and operation of their departments.

4.6 The dean, in consultation with the higher administration (and the directors of relevant agencies), shall consider the results of the review and determine whether a new department head is needed. The result of the faculty vote (by simple majority of those voting "yes" or "no" will be the best single indicator of faculty sentiment. In judging the significance of the vote, the size of the majority and the proportion of those eligible to vote who actually cast ballots should be taken into account.

4.7 Other factors entering the reappointment decision include the head's length of service and the information gained from other aspects of the review.

4.8 After the dean has reached a decision regarding the incumbent department head the decision, and the reasons for it, will be communicated by the dean to the faculty of the department.

5. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

5.1 When the faculty votes [cf. (I.4) and (II.3.b.ii)], the following proprieties shall be observed:

5.1.1 The vote shall be by secret ballot.

5.1.2 At least two working days should be allowed for the casting of ballots, and the dates should be announced at least one week in advance. Reasonable
efforts shall be made to enable faculty members absent from campus to vote.

5.1.3 Eligibility to vote should be carefully determined according to the structure of the department concerned. In the absence of a reasoned decision to the contrary, those eligible shall be those eligible to vote for members of the Faculty Senate.

5.2 The review described in this rule (I.3) is not intended to replace the periodic review of a department by a panel of outside experts. At the discretion of the dean, such an outside review may be combined, or conducted simultaneously, with the internal review of the head.

5.3 Prior to undertaking any review of the incumbent department head or seeking to appoint a new department head, the dean and the faculty of the department concerned should review the role, responsibilities, and special competencies expected of the department head.

5.4 Colleges are encouraged to establish more detailed procedures consistent with the principles and the spirit of this rule document. Faculty representatives shall be more involved in the drafting of such procedures.

5.5 Violations of the principles or the spirit of this rule and any other improprieties in the selection, evaluation, and retention of department heads shall be reported to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate.

OFFICE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

Dean of Faculties