Final Report of the Task Force on Divisional Structure and Function

The UWM Faculty Senate authorized the creation of a Task Force on Divisional Structure and Function in May 1985. The University Committee appointed nine tenured faculty members to constitute the Task Force in October 1985. The Task Force members, drawn from all four academic divisions, are as follows:

Melvin Friedman, Comparative Literature  
Phyllis Kritek, Health Restoration  
Fred Landis, Mechanical Engineering  
*William Mayrl, Sociology  
Oliver Myers, Spanish and Portuguese  
Nicholas Papastamatiou, Physics  
Diane Pollard, Educational Psychology  
Leslie Vansen, Art  
Edward Wellin, Anthropology (Chair)

*William Mayrl assumed a post in UWM Administration in Fall 1986 and was replaced by David Juce, Philosophy.

The task force was charged with the following functions:

1. To examine the effectiveness and fairness of the existing Divisional structures as defined in Chapter 3 of the UWM Policies and Procedures;

2. To solicit information from departments, Divisional Committees, recent candidates for promotion and other sources with regard to the above subject;

3. To gather data on Divisional structures and methods of promotion at other comparable institutions;

4. To review the criteria for promotion employed by Divisional Committees with regard to their comprehensiveness, adequacy, consonance with actual practice, etc.

5. To review procedures employed by Divisional Committees with regard to such matters as the propriety of a Committee's seeking out or employing information beyond that supplied it by the Department, the opportunities Departments and candidates have for responding to such information, etc.

6. To review the current policy of using the Divisional Committees in promotions to associate and full professors; and

7. To make recommendations regarding changes in the Divisional structure, criteria for promotion, procedures, etc., as may seem warranted by the task force in any of the above areas. Such recommendations will be reviewed by the University Committee and brought before the Faculty Senate for action.
Organization of the report

This report is divided into two parts. Part I summarizes the work of the task force during 1985-86 and represents the product of two lines of inquiry with regard to policies, criteria, and procedures bearing on tenure and promotion. One involved the gathering of information from other universities throughout the country. The second involved soliciting ideas and concerns from departments, Divisional Committees, administrators, and individual faculty members within UWM.

Part II presents the work of the task force during 1986-87 and is summarized in ten recommendations. The recommendations are based on the information gathered nation-wide, varied inputs from within UWM, and the task force's deliberations.

Part I

A. Information from other universities

The task force received and reviewed materials relating to promotion and tenure from 60 universities. These included the Big Ten campuses, the Urban 13, and a nationally representative sample of both private and state universities. Many of the country's "mature" universities, i.e., institutions with well-established graduate programs in most areas, provided the requested information. Although formally stated policies and procedures may not necessarily correspond to actual practice, the task force proceeded on the assumption that stated policy and actual practice were in reasonably close approximation.

Promotion and tenure procedures at other universities can be divided into three categories. The first consists of those features which hold across the board; despite variations in other respects, these are the policies and procedures which are virtually universal. The second category has to do with those features which, though by no means universal, characterize the policies and procedures of many universities; these are the fairly common features. The third consists of those features that exhibit no marked "central tendency"; that is, these are features with considerable variation.

Universal Features

1. Recommendations for tenure and/or promotion are initiated in the department or a comparable academic unit.

2. Departmental tenure recommendations are reviewed by an extra-departmental committee. This committee may be university-wide or drawn from a single school or college.

3. The recommendations of tenure review committees are advisory to college and campus administrations.

4. Members of faculty committees responsible for tenure reviews and recommendations (both departmental and extra-departmental) must themselves have tenure.
Fairly Common Features

1. Promotions both to the associate and full professor ranks are usually reviewed by a committee beyond the department. These committees are either standing or ad hoc in nature.

2. The stated criteria for tenure and promotion are commonly research, teaching, and service. However, among doctoral institutions, productivity in research (or in creativity, depending on the discipline) is the primary criterion for promotion and tenure.

3. The evaluations of scholars outside of the candidate's institution are sought as part of promotion and tenure reviews.

4. When such outside evaluations are sought, it is taken for granted that the confidentiality of letters from outside reviewers is maintained.

5. Members of faculty committees reviewing individuals for promotion are usually at or above the rank being sought.

Features with Considerable Variation

1. Some institutions explicitly discourage or even forbid the practice of extra-departmental review committees seeking information on candidates for tenure or promotion beyond what is provided by the department. Others encourage such committees to do so. Still others do not address the matter.

2. The role and power of the department chair vary considerably. In some institutions, the chair's role is apparently limited to transmitting the department's recommendation on promotion or tenure. In others, the chair has the option of making an independent recommendation.

3. In some institutions, the extra-departmental review committees are elected. In others, they are appointed on an ad hoc basis by a dean or by a standing faculty personnel committee.

4. Although, as noted, the stated criteria for tenure and promotion are virtually always research, teaching, and service (to the institution, profession, and community), there is much variation in the detail in which these are made explicit. Some institutions make it clear that service is the least important criterion.

5. While it is usually required that negative recommendations for tenure or promotion by departmental and extra-departmental review committees must be accompanied by a statement of the reasons for the action, some institutions go beyond this; a few stipulate that the committee's report of non-unanimous recommendations [whether positive or negative] include dissenting opinions with supporting data.
6. There is considerable variation in the coupling (or uncoupling) of tenure and rank. In some institutions, promotion to or initial appointment at the rank of associate professor is always linked with tenure. Some universities follow a variable policy: promotion to or initial appointment at associate professor rank may or may not be accompanied by tenure. With regard to initial appointments at the rank of associate professor (and in some cases at the rank of full professor), some institutions explicitly disallow that such appointments carry immediate tenure.

7. Occasionally, the list of administrators who are required to review and make recommendations in tenure and promotion cases includes the dean of the graduate school.

8. While there appears to be general agreement that an associate professorship may well be the highest rank achieved by some faculty members, some institutions include in their procedures a "normal duration" for that rank, usually five or six years.

n. Responses from within UWM

About 50 individual faculty members, representing all tenured and tenure-track ranks except Instructor, responded to the Task Force's invitation to communicate their thoughts and concerns regarding the policies, criteria, procedures, etc., having to do with tenure and promotion. In addition, communications were received from groups of faculty (including several departmental executive committees) and a number of administrators. Members of the Task Force also met with and received input from each of the Divisional Committees.

Correspondents addressed a wide range of issues. However, input tended to revolve around the policies, procedures, and criteria employed by Divisional Committees regarding:

(1) the granting of tenure,
(2) promotion to associate professor, and
(3) promotion to full professor.

On one fundamental point, UWM faculty and administrators are in agreement: There is need for faculty review committees outside the department to make advisory recommendations on tenure.
Beyond this fundamental agreement, there is no overall consensus. On the one hand, responses from some faculty members and departmental executive committees suggest that current policies, criteria, and procedures should remain as they are. Some proponents of the "don't change a thing" view hold that although the present system may not be ideal, it serves the purposes reasonably well of providing appropriate peer review and ensuring high levels of quality of UWM's tenured faculty. Other "don't change a thing" expressions are apparently responses to a rumor (quite unfounded) that the Task Force might recommend the dismantling of the Divisional Committee structure.

Other comments direct criticisms at and call for changes in the present system. Major issues raised by various correspondents are summarized below:

1. There is concern that true "peer review" is not always obtained. In some instances, it is believed that members of Divisional Committees are so far removed from a candidate's specialty that they do not adequately perform the functions of peer judgment.

2. Some respondents express the view that the Divisional Committee often serves as "judge, jury and prosecutor", and that when departmental representatives attempt to "make the case for a candidate", the discussion frequently turns adversarial rather than evaluative.

3. Procedures and criteria for promotion to full professor are matters of contention. Some correspondents insist that the Divisional Committee is not the appropriate body to review such promotions, while others believe that review for promotion to full professor should remain within the committee's purview. At the same time, a significant number of respondents feel that only full professors should review candidates for promotion to full professor.

4. Instances are reported in which the criteria for evaluating internal candidates for promotion are more stringent than those imposed on external appointments. There is also frustration with pressures to appoint an external candidate "to whom we have already offered the job", including appointments for administrators.

5. Divisional Committees are said to pay insufficient attention to the special features that may characterize the publishing situation in various fields. Specific complaints are that across-the-board emphasis is placed on refereed papers in prestigious journals without recognition that conference proceedings and less-than-prestigious sources may be normal and important outlets in some fields. This may be a criticism of both the Divisional Committee and the candidate's department; departments do not always provide the Divisional Committee with departmental criteria that call attention to the special characteristics of the publishing situation or other special features of the field.
6. Some complaints allege that the Divisional Committee sometimes solicits information on candidates beyond what the department provides. Should the Divisional Committee regard the department's documentation as inadequate, it is held that the committee should so inform the unit, without doing an "end run" around what the department submits.

7. Some junior faculty insist that they have no clear idea of what is expected of them in a tenure review. This tends to be as much a criticism of departments as of Divisional Committees.

8. Although it is generally accepted that research and/or creativity are of central importance with respect to tenure and promotion, some correspondents note that there is unclarity and inconsistency regarding the weight that is or should be accorded quality teaching and service.

In general, although issues were raised with regard to all four Divisional Committees, there appears to be less dissatisfaction with the Divisional Committees in the Humanities and Social Sciences than with those in the Natural Sciences and Professions.
Part II

Recommendations submitted by the
Task Force on Divisional Structure and Function

As noted, task force recommendations are based on information on promotion and tenure policies and procedures gathered from 69 universities nationwide; opinions and concerns on the subject solicited from individual faculty members, departments, Divisional Committees and administrators within UWM, and the deliberations of the task force.

The task force submits ten recommendations pertaining to the following six areas:

A. Procedures regarding the nomination and election of Divisional Executive Committee members (recommendations #1 - 4);

B. Submission of annual reports to the Faculty Senate by Divisional Executive Committees (recommendation #5);

C. Procedures to be followed prior to a Divisional Executive Committee's consideration of changes in criteria or procedural issues (recommendation #6);

D. Consideration of Departmental Executive Committee criteria by Divisional Executive Committees (recommendation #7);

E. Procedures to be employed when a Divisional Executive Committee utilizes information on candidates for tenure or promotion beyond the information provided by the candidate's department (recommendation #8); and

F. Review of candidates for full professor (recommendations # 9 and 10).
A. Procedures regarding the nomination and election of Divisional Executive Committee members:

UWM Policies and Procedures, Chapter 3.05, now states: "Divisional Executive Committees shall make, administer, and publish rules for the nomination and election of their own members." Although the nomination and election of members of all standing committees are governed by UWM Policies and Procedures, Chapter 6.24(1), current Chapter 3.05 exempts Divisional Executive Committees from these rules. There is no justification for this exemption from the provisions of Chapter 6.24(1). The task force recommends that Chapter 3.05 be revised in two parts, as follows:

1. The Faculty Senate shall determine the rules and procedures for the nomination and election of Divisional Executive Committee members.

2. Rules and procedures for the nomination and election of Divisional Executive Committee members shall be uniform for all Divisional Executive Committees.

UWM Policies and Procedures, Chapter 3.06, now states: "Divisional faculty members, through the departmental chairperson, nominate candidates for Divisional Executive Committees." Due to imprecise wording, Chapter 3.06 permits a candidate for a Divisional Executive Committee from one department to be nominated through the chair of another department. Task force recommends that Chapter 3.06 be revised as follows:

3. Candidates for Divisional Executive Committees are nominated by faculty members from the same Division through the nominee's departmental chairperson.

Inasmuch as Divisional Executive Committees are significantly involved in upholding the scholarly excellence of the faculty, it is important to ensure that active scholars serve on Divisional Executive Committees. In order to apprise faculty members of the scholarly records of nominees, the task force recommends that the following be adopted as an operational procedure:

4. Nominees for Divisional Executive Committees shall provide the Secretary of the University with a one page brief vitae which include evidence of the nominee's activity in teaching, and service recent and ongoing scholarship and/or creativity. These vitae shall be included with the ballots distributed to faculty members of each Division.
B. Submission of annual reports to the Faculty Senate by Divisional Executive Committees:

UWM Policies and Procedures, Chapter 6.11(2), sets forth that all standing committees are required to report at least annually to the Faculty. Reports are to be filed with the Secretary of the University and may be included as "Automatic Consent Business" in a Faculty or Faculty Senate Calendar. Currently, all standing committees except Divisional Executive Committees submit such annual reports. No justification exists for exempting Divisional Executive Committees from this requirement. The task force recommends the following:

5. Each Divisional Executive Committee shall submit an annual report to the Faculty Senate as do other standing committees. The report shall detail its activities, including such matters as the numbers of cases considered for tenure or promotion, numbers and types of advisory recommendations, numbers of reconsiderations, numbers of cases accepted and overturned by Dean.

(by gender and racial/ethnic status)

C. Procedures to be followed prior to a Divisional Executive Committee's consideration of changes in criteria or procedural issues. Tenured and non-tenured faculty members and their departments have interests just as vital as those of Divisional Executive Committees with respect to the criteria and procedures employed by Divisional Executive Committees. Therefore, when non-personnel matters, such as changes in criteria or procedures, are proposed by Divisional Executive Committees, faculty members should have advance notice of and opportunities for input into consideration of such matters. The task force recommends the following:

6. Agendas of Divisional Executive Committees listing all non-personnel items to be considered, such as changes in criteria or procedural issues, shall be distributed in advance to departments in the Division. Divisional Executive Committee consideration of all issues except personnel matters shall take place in open meetings and involve opportunities for consultation with and input from faculty members in the Division.
D. Consideration of Departmental Executive Committee criteria by Divisional Executive Committees:

UWM Policies and Procedures, Chapter 3.13 and 3.18, provide that Divisional Executive Committees annually distribute to members of the Division written statements of criteria, standards and guidelines regarding tenure and promotion. At the same time, Chapter 4.05(1) requires that Departmental Executive Committees prepare written criteria relating to renewal of appointments or recommending of tenure for departmental faculty. Chapter 4.05(1) includes the statement: "The relative importance of these functions [Teaching, research, and professional and public service and contribution to the University] shall be decided by the Departmental Executive Committee."

Thus, UWM Policies and Procedures mandate two discrete and unconnected provisions. One is that Divisional Executive Committees provide written statements of criteria for tenure and promotion. The other is that Departmental Executive Committees also provide written statements of criteria, with Departmental Executive Committees given latitude in weighting the "relative importance" of functions.

However, no provision is made for Divisional Executive Committees either to review Departmental Executive Committee criteria or to take Departmental criteria into consideration in reaching their personnel recommendations. The task force recommends the following:

7. Divisional Executive Committees shall take Departmental Executive Committee criteria for promotion and tenure into consideration in their deliberations regarding personnel from given Departments. Should a Divisional Executive Committee or Departmental Executive Committee perceive an apparent conflict or misunderstanding between the respective sets of criteria, representatives of the two bodies shall arrange to meet early in the academic year to identify the differences and seek a resolution.
E. Procedures to be employed when a Divisional Executive Committee utilizes information on a candidate for tenure or promotion beyond that provided by the candidate's department. On occasion, a Divisional Executive Committee has utilized information on a candidate for tenure or promotion beyond that provided by the candidate's department, and only the Divisional Executive Committee has been made privy to the additional information. The task force recommends the following:

8. Normally, if a Divisional Executive Committee requires additional information on a candidate for tenure or promotion, it shall request that the candidate's department provide such information. However, should a Divisional Executive Committee consider information on a candidate additional to that provided by the department, the Divisional Executive Committee is required to share that additional information and its source(s) with the candidate's Departmental Executive Committee at least one week prior to Divisional Executive Committee consideration of the candidate.

F. Review of candidates for full professor. Relative to this, the task force submits two recommendations. The first (#9) enunciates a principle and procedure on which there is broad consensus among UWM faculty and administrators. The task force recommends:

9. All candidates considered for promotion to full professor shall be reviewed by a faculty group outside the candidate's department.

The task force also recommends that current procedures for recommendations for promotion to full professor be revised, and that Professorial Review Committees be established for the purpose. This has a three-fold rationale:

1. Only full professors should pass judgment on recommendations for promotion to full professor. This accords with the usual practice in other universities; the common policy nationally is for members reviewing candidates for promotion to be at or above the rank being sought. Moreover, a significant number of UWM faculty responding to the task force's survey believe that only full professors should review candidates for full professor.

ii. The primary, and crucially important, function of Divisional Executive Committees is to consider recommendations for tenure. This function differs in purpose and nature from the review for promotion to full professor. Review of candidates for the initial granting of tenure considers potential and promise (as well as achievement) and implies a certain amount of risk. However, promotion to full professor centers on evaluation of achievement over a career of 10-15 years or more.
iii. The number of candidates for promotion to full professor is steadily increasing and will doubtless continue to increase. Thus, both in 1983-84 and 1985-86, Divisional Executive Committees considered a total of 52 cases. In 1983-84, 33% of the cases involved consideration for promotion to full professor; by 1985-86, such cases constituted 66%. Assignment of the functions to two committees would reduce Divisional Executive Committee workloads and would facilitate thorough reviews of candidates for tenure and of candidates for promotion to full professor. The task force recommends the following:

10. Each Division shall establish a Professorial Review Committee to advise the appropriate Dean on promotion to full professor and on the granting of tenure to outside candidates being recruited at full professor rank.

Each Professorial Review Committee shall consist of full professors with tenure, as with Divisional Executive Committees; each shall have five members. The provisions for nomination and election of members, length of term, standing of tenure, etc., shall be similar in effect for Divisional Executive Committees.