

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND PERSONNEL POLICY

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While reading the report of the University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC) and serving on grievance panels, memories of the "promotion game" surfaced which I had hoped were buried permanently. With the advent of collective bargaining, our promotion and tenure procedures will almost certainly be reexamined at an early date. As Chairman Bloom states in the UFPC's 1982 report, "...without respect, confidence and good will, no structure will operate very well." A substantial fraction of the faculty at HSU have already lost their respect, confidence and good will and collective bargaining has the potential to enlarge differences between university faculty and administration. The time is appropriate to begin a dialogue to simplify the labyrinthine complexity of the present process and to reestablish trust of the administration and of ourselves. The faculty is currently engaged in patching up the present procedures, but I argue that more extensive change is incumbent upon us.

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Some Suggestions

1. *The Mystique.* The mystery which cloaks the process must be eliminated. Every employee has a right to know the conditions of employment and advancement, but beyond the departmental level access to information is now sharply curtailed. It is ironic that a system devised to protect a faculty from an arbitrary administration gives rise to so much paranoia and fear of conspiracy. Such fears do have foundation. A school committee chair once explained to me privately that his committee had all agreed to push for one candidate and by implication had given lesser recommendation to others. If, as a result of open files, employees have a right to know what is said about

them at the departmental level, the right should also exist throughout the evaluation hierarchy. A standardized procedure should be adopted, records of ratings must be kept, an individual should receive clear yearly feedback, and the frequency-distribution of resulting aggregate weights should be published to allow candidates to know their precise relationship to other colleagues.

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The accountability of committee members for their personnel actions is a concept supported by increased litigation. In June of this year, for example, the United States Supreme Court refused to overturn the contempt conviction of James Dinnan, a personnel committee member of the University of Georgia. Dinnan had been found in contempt for refusing to tell the court how he voted on a tenure decision. Voting records of evaluators could become a routine addition to open personnel files by federal law.

2. *Dean of Faculty Development.* Contributing to existing high anxiety levels is the awareness that while the faculty spends thousands of hours on file evaluation, the administration, in contrast, can only spend a tiny fraction of the amount. From the employee point

of view the role of luck becomes important. If it is impossible for the President or even the Vice President for Academic Affairs to read and remember all that material, the questions arise: "What *do* they look for, what *do* they note?" Another layer of mystery has been added to the decision making process. HSU has gotten so large that administrators can no longer routinely become intimate with the work and progress of faculty. Employees do, however, have a right to be certain that their employer knows and understands their situation. The position of Faculty Development Coordinator should be upgraded to full-time administrative status, perhaps a deanship. The present job description could be expanded to include working with the UFPC as the President's agent, preparing the frequency distribution of aggregate weights, working on a personal level with faculty and becoming familiar with their work and problems, assisting faculty in file documentation, and most importantly, giving them yearly feedback from above which is explicit and constructively framed.

This position, particularly if filled from the faculty on a rotating basis, could help ensure the attributes of respect, confidence and goodwill which Bloom requests. The position could prevent a gap widening until a management versus labor adversarial relationship obtains. Faculty at the moment are *not* receiving the feedback and acknowledgement they deserve from the administration and this

position should be created regardless of the impetus from collective bargaining.

3. *All All-University Rating Formula.* Simplification of UFPC's task is difficult because Appendix J describes several quite different ways an individual can be of value to the institution and further prohibits UFPC from favoring one over another. More specifically, in discussing a prolific scholar, a candidate with modest but satisfactory achievement in all four areas, a hard-working campus statesperson, point systems which favor one kind of candidate over another are prohibited. The Appendix does not tell us how to know if those various candidates are being promoted at equal rates, however. In fact, the faculty *cannot* know because records do not exist, employee access is denied, and an explicit evaluation equation does not exist. A third layer of avoidable mystery had been added to the process. UFPC members become defensive and uneasy about the validity of their procedures while candidates fear a conspiracy of silence.

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Consider the following simple linear equation:

$$AW = 4X + 1X(1) + 1X(2) + 1X(3) + 1X(4) + 1X(5)$$

Where AW is the aggregate weight, an objective measure of a person's total value to the university. X(1) is the mean of the ratings of UFPC members on teaching effectiveness. X(2) is the mean rating of scholarship and creative activity and so forth. The numbers are weighting constants. The example above weights teaching equally to the four non-teaching areas and specifies the evaluation of a candidate with modest contributions in all four non-teaching areas. The prolific scholar could opt for the following evaluation:

$$AW = 4X(1) + 4X(2)$$

The person devoting time to two areas such as community service and university committee work could elect to be evaluated according to:

$$AW = 4X(1) + 2X(3) + 2X(4)$$

Candidates should work closely with the Dean of Faculty Development to choose an evaluation format to fit their unique talents. A limitation would be that weighting of teaching be the same for all faculty and that the sum of weights for non-teaching areas be a constant. A second major simplification of the UFPC's task would be the reduction in file size. Scholars would only need submit data on teaching and scholarship, for example. A third simplification would be the elimination of the consensus ranking requirement by committees. Committee members would simply turn in their ratings to the

chair, who would calculate AW by the appropriate formula for the candidate, and that's the end of it. Candidate fears concerning under-cover horse-trading would be eliminated.

4. *Feedback and Reconsideration.*

The reconsideration process has been perceived by everyone I know who has gone through it as deeply humiliating and intensely frustrating. Neither despair or anger are in the best interest of the university and both can be greatly ameliorated if faculty receive routine feedback from UFPC and the administration. The Dean of Faculty Development's role in the feedback process has already been discussed. The various personnel committees should provide all candidates with an individual report stating their AW and mean ratings along with comparative total distribution *prior* to forwarding the list to the President. It is particularly devastating to a candidate to be recommended for promotion and then receive denial. To believe that you are performing well, to have UFPC tell you the same, and then to be rejected is a shock. Current practice is for those rejected to receive a report and invitation for reconsideration. It is unjust to deny the same protection to someone in the middle or bottom of the UFPC list. All employees have a right to know their evaluation results.

In the absence of accurate feedback, it is most difficult to have a constructive reconsideration meeting. Time is wasted because employees must challenge the

UFPC perception of all five promotion categories because they do not know the area of weakness. In current practice the committee will not(or cannot) help and is seen as evasive, defensive and deceitful. It is much more humane to keep records and to provide all employees with useful specific information early enough to allow appropriate response. In answer to the argument that this would be too time consuming, keep in mind that committees would no longer be required to debate among themselves until consensus ranks are obtained.

Summary

This essay identifies four stages in our present personnel practice which are frequent sources of confusion, misinformation, and hard feelings. Suggestions are made which would greatly improve these problem areas and also simplify the task of UFPC. Since collective bargaining will soon become a reality, recommendations are cast in the form of bargaining issues:

1. Elevate a revised Appendix J to contract status.
2. Create a Dean of Faculty Development.
3. Give employees yearly feedback which is precise and constructive.
4. In promotion years, feedback to all occurs before forwarding a list to the President.
5. Establish an all-university evaluation formula which permits

faculty to develop unique attributes. This implies an all-university rating form.

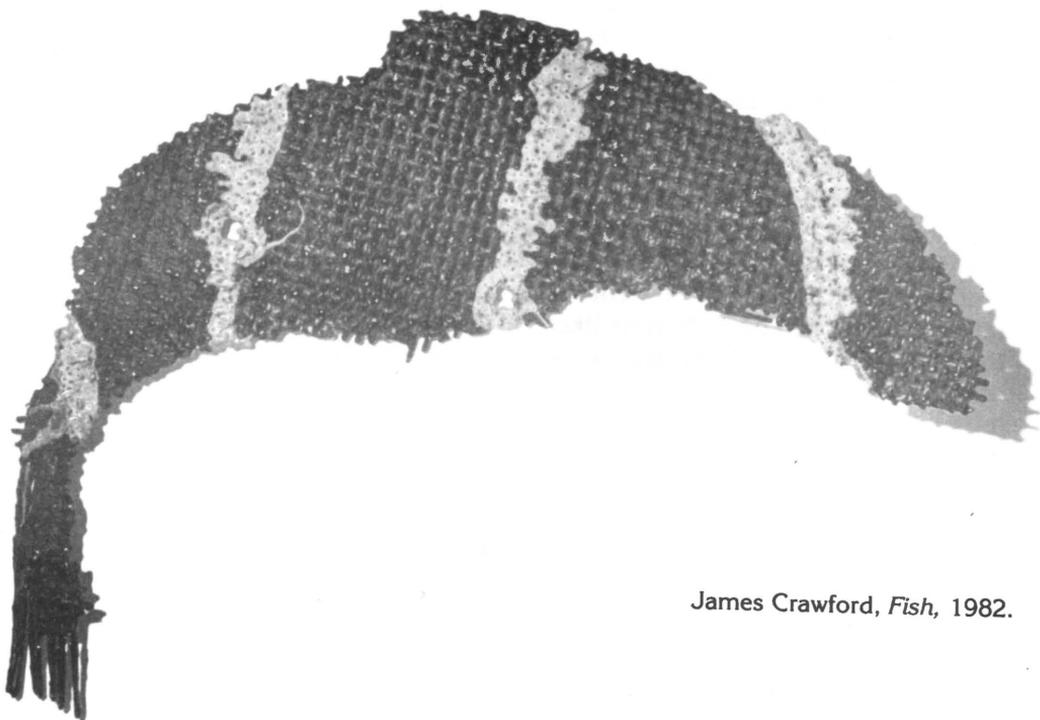
6. Eliminate consensus ranking and replace with independent rating.

7. Eliminate college level personnel committees to allow earlier recon-

sideration of UFPC evaluations.

8. Reconsideration is a right of all faculty and should occur before any list is sent to the President.

9. All evaluating entities will keep records and communicate explicit information to the faculty.



James Crawford, *Fish*, 1982.