

Recommendations from UTK Faculty Senate Leadership on the [February 17 Proposed Additions to the Post-Tenure Review Policy](#)

This report was adopted by the UTK Faculty Senate Executive Council through an electronic vote at 2:40pm on Thursday March 1, 2018 for consideration by the University Faculty Council.

PROCESS: For two years the University Faculty Council worked with the UT System Administration and the UT Board of Trustees to improve the post-tenure review system, which we only implemented this fall. This new Enhanced Post-Tenure Performance Review System (EPPR) modified the Cumulative Performance Review (CPR) post-tenure review system which had been in place for nearly two decades. The abbreviated timeline, poor communications from the UT system, and inherent ambiguities in the policy provisions added to the EPPR on February 17, 2018 have made it difficult for many faculty to trust the intentions of the system administration. Based on our survey of 662 UTK faculty, 552 (76.59%) objected to the proposed policy, with their comments reflecting justifiable concern about what is defined as a “program review” and a “comprehensive peer review,” which, in our profession, means external reviewers. Because of the ambiguity in the proposed language, some faculty perceived this as an effort to undermine tenure itself. There is also legitimate concern that the proposed policies represent a significant additional service obligation for the faculty, which would require more than half of the faculty to be involved in serving as peer reviewers or being reviewed annually, in addition to their regular individual annual reviews and ELEMENTS reporting. Of the 129 faculty members (19.49%) who supported the proposed policy, some did so because it represented improvements over the original (February 5, 2018) policy language.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, ACCREDITATION AND REPUTATION: To ensure the principles of academic freedom reflected in this proposed policy, it is important that our post-tenure review processes distinguish the policy-making role of the Board of Trustees from the evaluative role of campus administrators and faculty consistent with normative standards of academic governance. These differentiated roles are reflected in the [Government of Colleges and Universities \(jointly formulated in 1966 by the AAUP, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, and the American Council on Education\) statement, \(on page 4\)](#), as well as our university accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), [Principles of Accreditation, 3.2.4](#). Doing so is critical to ensuring not only our accreditation, but also our institutional reputation in attracting and retaining the best faculty and administrators.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the many faculty comments collected through our survey, we believe it prudent to have a chance to implement the new EPPR system, the language for which is still in the Office of the General Council, to assess its effectiveness before creating additional regulations and procedures.

If the UT Board of Trustees decides to adopt a policy that adds additional components of post-tenure review we recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM REVIEWS INITIATING POST-TENURE REVIEWS:

- Program Reviews should remain under the authority of the chief academic officer on each campus and should be understood as involving qualitative and quantitative information on the program’s teaching, research, service record, administrative effectiveness, and access to and use of a variety of

resources, typically in the context of THEC required Academic Performance Reviews or reviews for national accrediting organizations.

- It should be recognized that an academic program may be considered weak as a result of factors such as administrative leadership, staffing, facilities, resources, and other factors entirely separate from faculty performance, and any post-tenure review based on program reviews should only be initiated by a chief academic officer.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SIX-YEAR REVIEWS:

- If we are to implement a six-year review, the emphasis of these reviews should be on the integrity of the Faculty Annual Review (FAR) process and not a summative evaluation of the faculty member being reviewed.
- The six-year reviews should be based on the materials previously compiled for the faculty annual reviews, including a complete CV, and should involve a team of three campus faculty peers with appropriate disciplinary expertise via a process established by the chief academic officer.
- Faculty peers participating in a six-year review who do not agree with the majority opinion have the right to submit a letter of dissent to be included with the report.
- Unit heads who do not agree with the findings of the six-year review recommendation have rights of appeal through administrative channels.
- Faculty who do not agree with the six-year review recommendation have normal rights of appeal as described in existing policies.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY LANGUAGE:

The Board of Trustees recognizes and affirms the importance of tenure in protecting academic freedom and thus promoting the University's ~~principle~~ principal mission of discovery and dissemination of truth through teaching, research, and service. The Board also recognizes its fiduciary responsibility to students, parents, and all citizens of Tennessee to ensure that faculty members effectively serve the needs of students and the University throughout their careers. Therefore, in addition to the three circumstances listed above that will trigger an Enhanced Post-Tenure Performance Review of a tenured faculty member, the Board, pursuant to a duly adopted resolution, may require the President to establish procedures under which the chief academic officer of the campus could initiate a comprehensive peer ~~an Enhanced Post-Tenure Performance Review shall be conducted~~ of all tenured faculty members, ~~both tenured and non-tenured~~, in an academic program that has been identified as under-performing through ~~an~~ the academic program review process. In addition, the President shall establish, with Board approval, procedures ~~for every tenured faculty member at a campus to receive a comprehensive peer review~~ to establish internal, discipline-based faculty peer reviews based on the annual reviews to affirm the clarity, consistency and candor of the reviews of tenured faculty no less often than every six years. The procedures for this periodic review shall provide for appropriate staggering of reviews to avoid excessive administrative burden at any given time.