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DOC 2000-08 Technology and Tenure

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PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Technology and Tenure

SUBMITTED BY: Faculty Affairs Committee

DATE: March 31, 2000

ACTION IS: Legislative

REFERENCE IS: *Faculty Handbook*, Constitution of the Academic Senate of the University of Dayton, Article II, B, 2.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This proposal addresses concerns about the impact that technology will have on tenure and promotions decisions. The University has made a commitment to technology and is in the process of building an infrastructure to facilitate the use of technology by students and faculty. Many people feel that technology will transform the way that we educate students; others think that technology is a tool that does not fundamentally alter the way that faculty educate. Whatever its impact, it is likely to play a role in the way the we evaluate faculty. The Faculty Affairs Committee proposes that departments and units begin to consider the ways in which the new technologies impact their evaluation procedures.

1. Each department and unit should consider the impact that technology used in teaching and research has on their tenure and promotion policies.

Technology and the Tenure Process

*THIS STATEMENT IS PRESENTED TO THE PROVOST AND TO THE ACADEMIC
SENATE FOR YOUR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION.*

Prepared by: *Brian A. Young*
Department of Political Science

Technology and the Tenure Process at the University of Dayton:

Working within the traditional paradigm, faculty who devote their efforts to software/ courseware development have often jeopardized their academic careers.

This letter is meant to facilitate discussion concerning the factors regarding the tenure promotion process. The author hopes that the University of Dayton Academic Senate will look closely at the facets which have in the past dictated the granting of tenure (authorship, academic publications and or reviewers for magazines/ journals, student/ peer evaluations, and lecture presentations at conferences etc) and realize that technology, along with the new role of the professor in the classroom, has created a new and emerging set of criteria which should be included in the assessment of the tenure promotion process.

A number of forces are combining to change the promotion and tenure system, changes that can, if those faculty involved in design and creation of computer and classroom software build on them, facilitate the recognition of instructional software development as scholarly, professional, and creative work. The designing of instructional software is a challenging, complex and creative process. It requires a high level of discipline expertise, an in-depth knowledge of instructional design principles, a thorough understanding of one's students, an awareness of the potential of this new technology medium, a knowledge of programming and graphic design, and the extensive knowledge of one's discipline and how that discipline is juxtaposed with technology and the personality of the classroom as the software or courseware is scripted, produced, and revised.

Despite the masterful grasp one must have of his/her discipline, the difficulty of the task, the impact of the final product on the learning of students, the creativity that is involved and the competencies that are required to do it well, faculty who are involved find, much to their consternation, that members of the tenure committees rarely recognize software/ courseware development for the scholarly work that it is. With few guidelines or standards available on how to assess the final product, without the tradition of "refereed" journals and publication, with little knowledge on the part of members serving on tenure committees of the complexities of the software/ courseware design process, this lack of respect does not seem surprising. One main issue is that faculty are at a loss when it comes to documenting their software/ courseware design work, having little or no idea how to present this type of scholarly technological achievement, to demonstrate the significance and quality of their work, to tenure committees.

In keeping with its drive to refocus its academic priorities on the quality of education delivered to its student body, and recognizing that activities designed to improve learning are

becoming increasingly important to departments, schools, and colleges/ universities, the University of Dayton needs to promote and recognize software/ courseware development for the scholarly work that it is. Building on the work of the American Association of Higher Education, many small colleges and large institutions like Syracuse University are developing and actively pursuing the notion of having an expanded definition of "scholarship" to include software/ courseware development.[1]

During my two years at the University of Dayton I have learned much about what institutions of higher education mean when faculty members discuss the phrase "scholarly publication." While the different academic disciplines do not agree on a single definition of "scholarship" most do agree on features of scholarly or professional work. Although the importance placed on a specific activity will vary from case to case, six specific conditions seem to typify most "scholarly" or professional work or activity:

- The work requires a high level of discipline-related expertise
- Breaks new ground, is innovative
- Can be replicated or elaborated
- The work and its results can be documented
- The work and its results can be peer-reviewed
- The work/ activity has significance or impact [2]

There is no question that if developed with care and documented well, educational software/ courseware can and does meet all of the above criteria. Ultimately it is up to the faculty member to provide to the tenure review committee the combination of materials that address each of these issues and make the case for the "scholarship" of educational software/ courseware. Not to do so is a disservice to those who have developed effective educational software/ courseware and discourages other faculty from devoting their energies to this important work.

This author realizes that restructuring the criteria used to grant tenure will be, due to the very sensitive nature of this topic on campuses of higher education, a long and arduous task but if the University of Dayton simply starts to think about the new forms of "scholarly work" that are emerging then this paper has served its purpose. However, the ultimate goal is to eventually produce a statement that specifically include instructional software/ courseware development as an appropriate activity to be recognized as scholarly, professional, and creative for the purposes of promotion and tenure.

End Notes:

- 1 Notes from the Assistant Vice Chancellor at Syracuse University--Robert M. Diamond; "*Preparing for Promotion and Tenure Review*". Anker Publishing Co. 1996.

- 2 American Association for Higher Education; Conditions that constitute SCHOLARLY work--6 points provided by the American Association for Higher Education; "*1996 a look at tenure promotion on campus*"; September 14, 1996.