

Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

Responses to "Are We Throwing Away Too Much Talent? And If So, Why?"

12/1/93

In response to the piece in the December 1 **Faculty Forum**, I am sure that the author has good reason to remain anonymous, but I would like to shake that person's hand because we all know that she/he is right on the money. I would like to add my own observations on tenure, promotion, and reappointment procedures.

Isn't it true that in the "real world" when a person is turned down for a contract, a job, or a promotion the person has a legal right to know why? Many law suits have answered the question in the affirmative. Also, isn't it true that whenever we ask students to respond to a judgment question which may be answered yes or no we require a logical explanation justifying the answer given?

So why do we not require as much when it comes to TPR decisions? Why do we treat (mistreat) our faculty in this manner? I would really like to know the answer to this question. If you were turned down for promotion, would you not want to know what parts of your record were judged substandard and by how much? This is the only way you can know where your colleagues expect improvements. Also, without this information, there really is no appeal process.

Finally, why do we allow faculty to be judged (accused) through anonymous responses by students through the various evaluation forms used across campus. I fear that these evaluations are often misused in a very negative and harmful manner. Have these instruments been tested for validity and reliability? If any of these instruments have been shown to be accurate indicators of teaching effectiveness, what other methods of determining teaching effectiveness were they correlated with? (Not other student evaluation forms, I hope) And, why don't we just use these other methods?

This response probably should have been written during the year of WCUnique since according to the information I have obtained from other institutions, we seem to be somewhat unique in the way we handle TPR. If the procedures I have questioned do not need to be changed, then I really need an open explanation of why they are fair to faculty and good for the University. Will someone please enlighten us all in this regard?

Richard Stephens, Math & Computer Science

Why God Never Received Tenure

1. Because He had only one major publication.
2. And it was in Hebrew.
3. And it had no references.
4. And it wasn't published in a refereed journal.
5. And some even doubt He wrote it himself.
6. It may be true that He created the world, but what has He published/done since?
7. His cooperative efforts have been quite limited.
8. The scientific community has had a very rough time trying to repeat His results.

Clearly, His credentials leave something to be desired.

Source unknown. Passed along by **Richard Beam, Communication & Theatre Arts**

Responses to "Are We Throwing Away Too Much Talent?"

continued

It seems to this typist that Anonymous is becoming an all-too-frequent contributor to your publications. Not to say that Anonymous wasn't right on target in the most recent issue of Faculty Forum. But why should Anonymous be given space at all, much less the lead piece, in a publication supposedly committed to the free and open exchange of ideas? Is the climate around here so repressive that Anonymous--in this case a tenured faculty member, apparently--appears instead of an actual name? If not, are there other reasons why Anonymous should not only be allowed, but encouraged, to contribute to any nonfiction publication? Just thought I'd ask, not so anonymously.

Ben Anderson, Communication & Theatre Arts

Editor's note:

We appreciate Ben's reminder that we must be scrupulous when deciding whether to publish something without personal attribution. We honor a writer's request for anonymity unless there seems to be compelling reasons for not doing so. If it seems obvious that the request for anonymity comes from a desire to hurt a particular party or to hide from responsibility we will refuse the request for anonymity, but we generally assume that there are as many good reasons for requesting anonymity as there are bad and that our colleagues generally know what is best for their situation. In the case Ben is responding to, the writer is not a tenured faculty member, but the main reason for requesting anonymity is quite idiosyncratic and has little to do with either tenure or the fear of a repressive academic culture. We feel that anonymity is an important ingredient in a "free and open exchange of ideas," and as a "forum" we are more interested in the ideas we publish than in the personalities that might be connected with those ideas. Sometimes we don't ourselves know who the author is. That makes our decisions more difficult, and sometimes we will certainly make mistakes in this matter. We depend on feedback like Ben's to put us on our proper guard.