Collegial Review Council, March 2013

**CRC Resolution: Senate Endorsement of Best Practices Recommendation to Provost and Council of Deans on Abstention Voting in Collegial Review Actions.**

Whereas, the Faculty Senate in November 2010 successfully passed the following Best Practices Guidelines Resolution from CRC,

*CRC Resolution: Best Practice guidelines for College Collegial Review Committees*

*The Collegial Review Council recommends the following considerations to the Council of Deans as best practice guidelines in the leadership of collegial review committees.*

*Collegial review committees may determine whether annual meetings for the reiteration of guidelines and confidentiality, and other suggestions to improve the process, are required or recommended prior and / or subsequent to the review of files.*

*College collegial review committees should operate with a written “Charge to the Committee,” produced by the committee members and the Dean.*

*The written charge will outline procedure and rules for the committee’s meetings in the given academic year. The charge may be modified and refined in meetings subsequent to the review of candidate files.*

*The written charge should include a statement on confidentiality that the committee members sign prior to commencing review of candidate files and collegial review meetings.*

Whereas, following the CRC's study during Fall 2012 of comparative practices in peer and system institutions and current scholarship[[1]](#footnote-1) regarding growing and illegitimate use of abstention voting in collegial review actions, the Collegial Review Council would like to reissue and amend the previous Best Practices recommendation to include a statement that clarifies conflict of interest abstention from voluntary abstention, and;

Whereas, abstention due to conflict of interest is an important and necessary element of the collegial review process (in the case of marriage / partnership / legal or business relationships of a magnitude that would prevent impartiality), voluntary abstention (a refusal to make a hard call on a collegial review case; a concern with one's anonymity in the case of a uniformly negative vote; or incomplete preparation for a collegial review meeting) is a failure to perform one's collegial review committee responsibility;

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate requests that the Council of Deans and Provost consider adding the following statement to the written committee charges for college and university collegial review committees. Furthermore, department heads should be encouraged to discuss abstention in collegial review voting with their faculty. We also request that our Best Practices Guidelines in Collegial Review Actions from 2010 be amended and reissued with the following additions, in bold type.

CRC Resolution: Best Practice guidelines for College Collegial Review Committees

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Collegial review committees may determine whether annual meetings for the reiteration of guidelines and confidentiality, and other suggestions to improve the process, are required or recommended prior and / or subsequent to the review of files.

College collegial review committees should operate with a written “Charge to the Committee,” produced by the committee members and the Dean.

The written charge will outline procedure and rules for the committee’s meetings in the given academic year. The charge may be modified and refined in meetings subsequent to the review of candidate files.

The written charge should include a statement on confidentiality that the committee members sign prior to commencing review of candidate files and collegial review meetings.

**Conflicts of interest (based on marriage / personal relationship / other relationships that result in a clear conflict of interest) must be discussed with the collegial review committee chair prior to the meeting when candidate files are discussed and voted upon. Committee members with a valid conflict of interest should be asked by the committee chair to leave the room during discussion and / or voting on the candidate file in question, and therefore should be counted absent for the vote on that candidate file.**

**The Faculty Handbook 4.04 E. 3.f., 4.g, 5.e states that:“[I]n review actions requiring a vote, a majority vote of the committee is required for a positive recommendation.” While frowned upon, Committee members may refrain from voting (“abstain”) if they elect to do so. Committee members who choose to abstain must be aware that they will be considered “present” for the purpose of determining a quorum; however, their abstention will not be considered when determining a majority vote of the number of voting committee members. (per Robert's Rules of Order and the Faculty Handbook).**

1. *Chronicle of Higher Education* ['I Abstain': A Failure of Academic Citizenship?, by Michael Bugeja, 20. 12. 2011; <http://chronicle.com/article/article-content/130107/> ] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)