

Report of the Faculty Senate Hiring Review Committee

Presented to Chancellor Frank Gilmore
April 16, 2003

1. Background.

The overriding concern of the Faculty Senate is that hiring for tenure-track positions serve the best interests of the Montana Tech campus by seeking qualified applicants from wide pools of candidates. It is not the intent of the senate committee to second-guess the difficult and time consuming work done by search committees, nor the process and compliance work done by the Montana Tech personnel office.

The Faculty Senate formed an internal review committee for the purpose of determining whether or not such hiring conformed with procedures as described in the faculty handbook. Initially, this concern came about when non-tenure-track lab director positions were converted to tenure-track, and the individuals then holding those positions were promoted to tenure-track assistant professor. This opened-up the entire question of conformity of hiring practices for tenure-track positions, prompting a review of all recent hires. However, the scope of this review became limited to new hires exclusive of the four lab director positions, those positions having been defined by Chancellor Gilmore as “promotions,” and therefore outside of the committee’s concerns about practices for new hires. The Faculty Senate does not agree, and considers the positions to be new tenure-track positions with new responsibilities and new professional requirements, thus subject to handbook rules.

2. Materials provided.

The committee asked to Personnel Director for documentation related to searches and interviews for tenure-track positions over approximately the 18 months up to late summer, 2002, and for copies of the relevant policy and procedure guides furnished to search committees. The committee asked for the names and number of finalists (public information), and for only the number of applicants, not names, thus respecting their legal rights to confidentiality.

No doubt, a tremendous amount of work went into compiling the packets of information provided by Personnel. None-the-less, the committee was disappointed by and concerned with the disarray, inconsistency and paucity of documentation. The committee had expected that documentation about advertising, screening, selection, etc. would be complete, organized and easily reviewed, given the likelihood that from time to time it might be necessary for the administration to demonstrate to outside parties that searches had been conducted in accordance with campus policy and labor laws. Instead, documentation varied considerably from candidate to candidate, making it difficult to determine the thoroughness of searches and compliance with policy.

3. Problems observed.

The personnel office's policy and procedure manuals and guides dealing with faculty searches are clear and unambiguous, as is the faculty handbook, Sec. II.204. Most of the searches appear to meet policy and procedure requirements, some better than others. There were, however, some instances of failure, as indicated in the observations that follow.

(A) Advertising: Copies of actual job ads, and thus proof of effort to reach a large pool of applicants, were often missing thus providing no information as to the adequacy of advertising. In some cases, it appears that job openings were posted briefly or not at optimal times during the academic year (Nov.-Dec.-Jan.-Feb.). Late posting greatly limits the number of candidates, and is unfair to the home campus of candidates, as it forces a search crisis upon them.

(B) Missing information in PRA's. Part of the advertising scope and length problem may relate to delays in getting timely approval of PRA's, but the second pages of some PRA's showing job starting and subsequent approval dates were missing, making it impossible to determine if the actual search was of a duration consistent with serious effort.

(C) Change in PRA after posting. The salary for a position in PTC was reduced after the position had been posted.

(D) Successful candidate's qualifications did not match all of the advertised requirements (Mining Dept.), and the search committee lacked a truly independent outside member. The final reviews and selection were conducted during the summer, when faculty are not normally available.

4. Conclusions.

This report is not presented as a comprehensive review of tenure-track hiring practices at Montana Tech, given the fact that the senate committee members' time is fully occupied with teaching and research, and that documentation provided, even though it may have been all that was available, did not support a comprehensive review. However, the committee does feel that in spite of the limited time and documentation available, the observations noted above are valid. The principal conclusion is that policy and procedures are not followed in all cases, and where those exceptions occur, documentation justifying the exceptions does not exist. Moreover, judging from the documentation provided the committee, search files are not orderly or complete, and compliance with policy and procedure by search committees needs to be enforced.

Again, these conclusions are presented out of concern that the policies and procedures designed to attract high-quality tenured faculty be observed and honored.