




Office of the Provost and
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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TO: Richard Koubek, President

FROM: Andrew Storer, Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs 

DATE: May 31, 2024

SUBJECT: Senate Proposal 22-24

Attached is Senate proposal 22-24, "Modify Senate Procedure 506.1.1. – Department Chair Evaluation", and a memo stating the Senate passed this proposal at their April 17, 2024 meeting. I have reviewed this proposal and recommend that we not approve the proposal at this time. There are a number of concerns about the proposal, some of which are described below.

Concerns and comments on the proposal.

- Chairs are ongoing appointments and therefore the discussion of term lengths is moot. Periodic evaluations of chairs are not part of a reappointment process. A standard interval of periodic evaluations should be proposed.
- Chair positions have no term limit, so initiating a new search when there is a sitting chair who is not leaving is not appropriate.
- Formative feedback discussion in year 2 is overly prescriptive of how a chair should solicit informal feedback. Having a review process every three or four year that follows a senate process is helpful and is in addition to an annual review by the dean as the supervisor of the chair (during which the dean may choose to include formal or informal solicitation of feedback).
- The section on the survey instrument needs some clarification. It refers to a set of questions required by the Senate but does not list these. At a minimum an instrument might include a standard set of questions from the Senate plus a free form response box. Examples of other sources of questions can then be provided as an option for the reviewing unit to include.
- Section IX should be deleted. The review committee finalizes the survey instrument. Respondents have an open response box to use to convey anything that is not covered in the questions and which they think is important.
- Section XIII. The purpose of the faculty and staff meeting is to share the results of the report. This is not a time to amend the report or summarize the discussion.
- Please clarify how the confidential comments by respondents are handled.

I concur do not concur with the provost's recommendation as stated in this memo.

Richard Koubek, President

Date



Michigan Tech

University Senate

DATE: April 18, 2024
TO: Richard Koubek, President
FROM: Robert Hutchinson
University Senate President
SUBJECT: Proposal 22-24
COPIES: Andrew Storer, Provost & Senior VP for Academic Affairs

At its meeting on April 17, 2024, the University Senate approved Proposal 22-24, "Modify Senate Procedure 506.1.1 - Department Chair Evaluation." Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 22-24

Modify Senate Procedure 506.1.1- Department Chair Evaluation

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

This proposal is dated March 28, 2024.

APC/Michigan Tech Senate

Senate Procedures 506.1.1 - Department Chair Evaluation

I. Introduction

This document is the common procedure for evaluating the department chairs.

II. Standard Term Length for a Departmental Chair

The term of a new departmental chair will be as follows:

1. An initial term of four years.
2. Upon reappointment, a second term of three years.
3. All subsequent terms will have a length of three years.

III. Types and Frequencies of Performance Reviews and Formative Feedback Discussions

In the first term of the chair, there will be performance reviews as follows:

1. In the first term of the department chair (lasting four years), there will be:
 - a. An internal formative feedback discussion initiated during Year 2.
 - b. A performance review in Year 4.
2. In the department chair's second term (lasting three years), there will be a performance review in Year 3. The chair will move to their third term if the performance review is positive.

3. After the third term (lasting three years), the chair will have held the position for ten years. At that point, the dean will initiate a new search. The current chair may elect to be a candidate in that search.

A **performance review** will be initiated within the last seven weeks of the fall semester unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case the review can be held outside of this time frame with the dean's approval. Outside of scheduled reviews, the College Dean or the departmental faculty and staff (by a simple majority vote of those identified in the department charter) may initiate a review during any year except Year 1 of a new appointment. Reviews may not be initiated more than once per calendar year.

Once a performance review is initiated, the department chair may decide not to seek reappointment at any point in the evaluation process. In this case, the review process ends, and the review committee destroys all related material.

In Year 2 of the first term of a new chair, there will be a **formative feedback** discussion. This formative feedback aims to strengthen the two-way communication between faculty and staff with the new department chair. The process will be scheduled over five weeks in either the fall or spring semester within five weeks, decided by a majority vote of the faculty and staff. The intent is to enable faculty and staff to have an open and honest discussion with the departmental chair to voice concerns over the direction the department is taking under the department chair's leadership. A starting point for the department chair's formative feedback will typically be the charge the college dean gave to the departmental chair. That set of accomplishments should frame at least part of the discussion. The departmental chair likewise may indicate the reasons for specific directions of their leadership. Conversely, the chair will assess the department's current status and describe goals for the following years, along with the enabling rationale. The process the department follows for the department chair's formative feedback must be discussed and accepted by the department faculty and staff by majority vote.

The specifics of how the formative feedback discussion process will be implemented are the responsibility of the department's faculty and staff. No report on the formative feedback process will leave the department in any form. The only form of reporting is that the department chair must include in their annual report to the college dean the existence of the formative feedback discussion process and whether it ran in the year being reported—or not.

IV. Constituency and Department Reappointment Review Committee

The department charter shall specify the department constituency, specifically for who is eligible to participate in the evaluation process and vote, as well as the structure and selection of the committee for the review of their department chair. The department charter shall further define whether the survey and ballot will be done for the entire department constituency or separately for faculty and staff. If at most three staff members are in the department, only one survey instrument may be used.

The committee will not include the current department chair or any faculty or staff member with a conflict of interest regarding the current department chair's review. The college dean will resolve any conflict of interest if it concerns any individual's eligibility to serve as a review committee member.

The committee also includes a member from outside the department appointed by the college dean. This external committee member's only function is to observe the integrity of the review process and act as a liaison to the college dean.

The review committee follows Senate procedures 506.1.1 (this procedure) and 507.1.1 to conduct and complete an evaluation of the department chair. The voting process shall follow the department charter and senate procedures. In case of inconsistency, the intent of the senate procedure takes precedence.

The entire university community recognizes the effort required to serve on a review committee. Everyone involved with the process must be vigilant in maintaining collegiality and professionalism. It is also essential that the confidential nature of the process be respected to protect the department constituency, the review committee, and the individual under review. The review of a chair is an important task; the strength and integrity of the institution depend upon it being conducted in a way that encourages continuous improvement of the university as a whole.

Any questions about implementing or interpreting this procedure should be directed to the college dean through the chair of the reappointment review committee.

V. Review Process Initiation

The college dean will ask the department chair to establish the chair evaluation committee per the department's charter; the committee should be established within two weeks of the dean's request. The college dean will appoint a member from outside the department to serve on the committee. The college dean will also ask the department chair to write their self-evaluation report (Section VI. Department Chair's Self-Evaluation) and provide it to the dean within two weeks.

VI. Department Chair's Self-Evaluation

The department chair should prepare a written document evaluating their performance for the evaluation period. This document should include but is not limited to

1. They address each charge given at the time of their appointment;
2. Achieving the department's goals for the period of review,
3. Budgeting and budget management,
4. Growth and quality of academic programs,
5. Future needs and directions of the department, and
6. Any issue that the department chair thinks is controversial in the department and the effort they made to address the controversy.

The department chair is strongly encouraged to provide comparative quantitative data in this report where relevant.

VII. First Meeting of the Department Review Committee

The college dean shall call the committee's first meeting and review its charge, the procedures it should operate under, and the deadlines it should meet. A suggested timetable for the review committee's activities is provided in Section XIX. The college dean will give the following documents to the review committee:

1. A redacted copy of the letter of appointment describing the charge given to the department chair,
2. The electronic copy of the self-evaluation report of the department chair,
3. Results of the previous evaluation if the department chair seeks another term, and
4. A set of survey questions that is common to all departments in the university.

The review committee shall decide if additional material is needed (for example, comparative data from institutional analysis) and seek to procure such material.

The review committee shall elect its chair, establish its structure, and inform the college dean and the entire department constituency of this structure, as well as the purpose and membership of the review committee.

The committee will also, at this time, make the electronic copy of the chair's self-evaluation report available to the department constituency. A meeting of the department constituency will follow the distribution of this report. The purpose of this meeting will be for the department chair to respond to questions and clarify the report.

VIII. Survey Instrument

The survey instrument will have the following first two components:

1. A set of questions provided by the college dean in an electronic file and
2. A set of questions that the review committee chooses.

The survey instrument should address (but not be limited to) the following to assist the dean in responding to the questions required by the Senate:

1. Definition of goals within the department and progress of the department toward these established goals;
2. Management and guidance of personnel within the department, including professional growth and retention;
3. Guidance and management of the quality and growth of the academic programs within the department;

4. Guidance and support of research activities within the department; and
5. The practice of sound financial management within the department.

Additional survey questions used in the past by various departments can be helpful guides and are available from the Senate office.

One survey will be used for faculty and staff if the department has fewer than three staff. If there are three or more staff in the department, whether one form will be used for staff and a second for faculty is a departmental decision that must be codified in the departmental charter.

The survey instrument will have two final components:

6. The department chair may provide up to two questions if they choose to, and
7. Insertion of one box for free-form, written comments that can be viewed only by the college dean.

IX. Department Constituency Input

The department chair's self-evaluation report, the redacted letter of appointment describing the charge, and the survey instrument should be made available electronically to the entire department constituency. Subsequently, the department constituency will meet without the department chair present to discuss, change, and approve the survey instrument. At this meeting, past evaluation results may also be shown for comparison.

If there are three or more faculty in the department, and the department charter requires that survey results and ballots be tabulated separately for faculty and staff, faculty and staff in the department constituency will meet separately to discuss their respective survey instruments. In all other cases, faculty and staff will meet to discuss their surveys, but with the provision that in the case of less than three staff in the department, the comments of staff on the survey will be viewed only by the Dean and no one else.

The survey results and comments must be treated with confidentiality and viewed and discussed only by people authorized in this procedure as prescribed in the department charter.

X. Conduct of Survey

Senate Procedure 507.1.1 describes how the survey is conducted. The committee chair and the external review committee member are responsible for maintaining the security of these files and the information they contain.

XI. Survey Report

The review committee will prepare a survey report that includes:

1. Tabulated survey results, and
2. Summary statements of the major accomplishments throughout the evaluation period and areas for improvement of the department chair. This part of the survey report should be grounded in the charge given to the departmental chair by the college dean.

XII. Department Chair's Response

The review committee will give the department chair the survey report, except for the part containing the written comments intended only for the college dean. (Section XI. Survey Report).

The review committee will encourage the department chair to respond to the survey report before presenting it to the department constituency. The department chair will have five working days to provide a written response to the review committee's report.

The survey report, along with the department chair's response (if a response is supplied), combined with the chair's self-evaluation report, will be called the "Department Evaluation Report."

Suppose the college dean informs the review committee that the department chair has decided not to seek reappointment. In that case, the committee will destroy all review material, dissolve the committee, and inform the department constituency about the department chair's decision at the time of the dissolution.

XIII. Presentation of Department Evaluation Report:

For the review period, the review committee will ensure two copies of the Department Evaluation Report are available for viewing by the department constituency at two secure sites where no copies can be made, as unauthorized copying compromises the integrity of the process. One site will be in the college dean's office, and the other will be in the department.

The review committee will arrange a closed faculty and staff meeting to circulate the Department Evaluation Report. Copies of the Report will not be taken outside the meeting room, and all the circulated copies will be destroyed after the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is two-fold: (a) the presentation of the Department Evaluation Report by the Reappointment Evaluation Committee and (b) as a final chance for the faculty and staff to discuss in closed session elements of the Department Evaluation Report and/or other topics thought to be relevant to the evaluation. The arbiter determining if a subject is relevant is the Department Reappointment Review Committee. If the Reappointment Review Committee is evenly split in determining if a subject is relevant, the Chairperson of the Reappointment Review Committee becomes the arbiter. The chair may append the Department Evaluation Report with a summary of the discussion at the final meeting, included in the committee's report to the Dean.

XIV. Balloting

The final ballot goes to the constituency identified in the department charter; the Senate Administrative Assistant (SAA), on request from the review committee chair, conducts the actual online process for balloting through the procedure outlined in Procedure 507.1.1. As outlined in Procedure 507.1.1, the ballot will read:

(Name of department chair) should be reappointed and continue as the Department Chair.

Yes No Abstain

The SAA will return the balloting results (two sets of ballots if faculty and staff vote separately) to the chair and the external member of the review committee. The review committee chair will inform the SAA of the receipt of the ballot results and ask the SAA to delete all the voting results in the senate office. The review committee will inform the department chair (first) and the department constituency (second) of the ballot results.

XV. Department Evaluation Report to the College Dean

A file containing a copy of the Department Evaluation Report and the ballot results will be forwarded to the college dean. Upon receipt of this file, the college dean will notify the review committee to destroy any remaining copies of the Department Evaluation Report and other material related to the review process.

The review committee will write a memo to the senate president and the college dean with recommendations for changes in the evaluation procedure (if any) to support continuous process improvement.

XVI. Final Report by the College Dean

The college dean must prepare a written final report of the evaluation of the department chair, including but not limited to the following areas:

1. Guidance and management of the quality and growth of the academic programs within the department,
2. Guidance and support of research activities within the department,
3. The practice of sound financial management within the department,
4. Management and guidance of personnel within the department,
5. Definition of goals within the department and progress of the department toward these established goals, and
6. A confidential appendix is allowed that is kept from the department in cases where the college dean feels the need to formally document progress, problems, or advice with only the department chair.

This appendix is included with the final report and forwarded through the administrative structure to the President.

The college dean will meet with the department chair to discuss the final evaluation report, ballot results, and the reappointment recommendation.

XVII. Implementation of the Results

The college dean will forward the final report and their recommendation through the administrative structure to the university president.

If the department constituency of either faculty or staff (or both combined if a single ballot was conducted for the entire department constituency) votes by a two-thirds majority against the reappointment of the department chair, the administration will normally honor the department's decision.

If the administration decides to reappoint a department chair contrary to the majority vote of the department constituency of either faculty or staff (or both combined if a single ballot was conducted for the entire department constituency), the college dean will provide a written explanation of the reasons for that decision to the members of the academic department.

The college dean will present the administration's decision and discuss the contents of the final report at a meeting with the department. The department chair will not be present at this meeting. The college dean's final evaluation report, not including the confidential appendix, will be shared with the department and form the basis for the discussion in the meeting.

XVIII. Closure and Storage of Evaluation Material

All evaluation material will be kept in the college dean's office and supplied to the next review committee (Section VII. the First Meeting of the Department Review Committee). Once the department chair leaves the position, all evaluation material, except that required by the Office of Human Resources, will be destroyed.

XIX. Sample Timeline of the Review Process

The timeline below is suggestive and not prescriptive. It is possible to reduce the total time for the review process by doing some activities simultaneously. It is recommended that the review committee establish its timeline for conducting the review promptly. The evaluation process should be done with expediency - the recommended timeline is as follows:

Weeks 1 & 2: The college dean requests the department chair to form the review committee and write the self-evaluation report. (Section V. Review Process Initiation, and Section VI. Department Chair Self-Evaluation)

Week 3: The college dean appoints the external member of the review committee, and and calls the first meeting of the review committee, defines the charge, and provides the review committee with all relevant documents. The review committee elects a chair, decides, and informs the college dean and the department constituency on the review committee's structure, purpose, and membership. (Section VII. First Meeting of the Department Review Committee). The review committee shares the chair's self-evaluation report with the department constituency and then schedules a meeting of the department constituency following the distribution of this report.

Week 4: The review committee develops the constituency's survey instrument(s). (Section VIII. Survey Instrument)

Week 5: The department constituency approves the survey instrument(s). (Section IX. Department Constituency Input)

Weeks 6-7: The review committee sends the survey instrument(s) and list of email addresses to the SAA who conducts the survey, and returns the results. (Section X. Conduct of Survey, and Senate Procedure 507.1.1)

Week 8: The review committee writes the survey report. (Section XI. Survey Report)

Week 9: The review committee sends the survey report to the department chair and solicits their response. The review committee compiles the department evaluation report. (Section XII. Department Chair's Response)

Week 10: The review committee calls a meeting of the department constituency to present the department evaluation report and to establish a secure site where the department constituency can view the report. (Section XIII. Presentation of Department Evaluation Report).

Week 11: The ballot for the reappointment is conducted (Section XIV. Balloting and Senate Procedure 507.1.1).

Week 12: The review committee sends the Department Evaluation Report and the ballot results to the college dean. The college dean informs the review committee of the receipt of the Department Evaluation Report and ballot results. The review committee destroys all evaluation-related material. (Sections XV. Department Evaluation Report to the college dean).

Week 13: The college dean writes the final report and meets with the department chair to discuss it and the recommendation for reappointment (Section XVI. Final Report by the college dean).

Week 14: The college dean calls the department constituency meeting to discuss the final report and the administration's decision on the reappointment. (Section XVII. Implementation of the Results).