

Tenure Taskforce Summary

Introduction

The Santiago Canyon College's tenure faculty evaluation process has not been revised in many years. Review and improvement of the current system needs to occur to ensure institutional growth and betterment. In response, the tenure taskforce was formed under the direction of the Santiago Canyon College Academic Senate. The main focus of the taskforce was to review the current tenure and faculty evaluation process and make recommendations to the senate. The taskforce was comprised of faculty with one faculty member being an executive board member of FARSCCD.

Inquiry and Exploration

During the initial stages, the taskforce reviewed and compared SCC's current tenure evaluation process, as outlined in Article 8 of the RSCCD contract to other neighboring districts. It appeared that there was no standard process with the inclusion of the classroom observations and student evaluations. Many of the surrounding districts do not include some of the aspects that Santiago Canyon College encompasses such as colleague surveys and the self-evaluation. Other differences were how often the faculty were evaluated, the scale used to assess faculty and the areas faculty were assessed. It also appeared that other districts evaluated more often and provided more specific feedback. For example, they would evaluate both in the first and second semester teaching and for each area of evaluation, one could note if the probationary faculty was "outstanding," "strong," "satisfactory," "needs improvement," or "unsatisfactory," noting any strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to researching how other community colleges address tenure and faculty evaluation the taskforce conducted a survey in May 2019. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the faculty's understanding of and the attitudes towards the current tenure evaluation process at Santiago Canyon College and to facilitate feedback on how to improve the process. The survey consisted of 9 questions/statements

presented with a Likert Scale where responses could range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. In addition to the 9 questions the survey also allowed for a respondent's narrative on how to improve the process. Forty-six faculty members responded to the initial survey. Table 1 shows the results of the closed-ended questions followed by the narratives on how to improve the tenure evaluation process in Table 2.

Table 1

The purpose of the tenure evaluation of probationary faculty is clear and known.	5.32
As a peer evaluator, the tenure process criteria used to evaluate is clear and consistent for each faculty.	4.54
Subsequent classroom observations and evaluations in the Spring semester in the first year of tenure review would provide useful information.	5.13
The tenure process is clear and consistent across departments and divisions.	3.47
It would be beneficial to have the administrative summary presented to the probationary faculty before the meeting with the supervising administrator.	5.60
Probationary faculty going through tenure should be nurtured/mentored through the process.	6.5
Peer classroom observations provide useful information during the tenure process.	5.93
Colleague surveys provide useful information during the tenure process.	4.47
The self-evaluation is useful during the tenure process.	5.36

Survey scale values (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = mildly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = mildly agree, 6 = agree and 7 = strongly agree)

The results in Table 1 does not show “strong” opinions either way in any of the categories with the exception that probationary faculty should be mentored and nurtured through the process. The data does also suggest that the faculty may not feel that the tenure process is clear and consistent across departments and divisions as well as for each probationary faculty member. Although not as significant, another area that was identified was whether or not the colleague surveys provide useful information. Finally, the results show a tendency among faculty to agree that peer classroom observations, student evaluations and the self-evaluation are useful in the tenure evaluation process. It was also identified that it would be beneficial for the probationary faculty to view the administrative summary prior to meeting with the supervising administrator and/or committee.

Table 2 are narratives provided by the respondents:

Table 2

<p>Please provide any comments to help improve our tenure evaluation process:</p>
<p><i>(This comment is irrelevant to the current topic as it isn't about the tenure process, but rather about post tenure evaluations)</i></p>
<p>The process needs to be recalibrated - the process is excessive after a certain point - extensive, time-consuming three year evaluations years of service is counterproductive. Substandard performance should have been caught during the initial tenure process or soon afterwards in a subsequent evaluation. As an employee approaches 15+ years, change the process. Minimize or suspend need for portfolio, for example. Anything/something to revolutionize/reorganize the process, especially for long term faculty.</p>
<p>More feedback by the dean during the process would be helpful. My dean has been incredibly supportive but an 'end of spring semester check-in' to make sure there are no issues/concerns would be helpful.</p>
<p>The purpose of the process is good but implementation varies widely by dept and individual. Too often, the process is superficial and based on emotional or personal reactions rather than ability to do a good job for students. The tenure process in reality tends to document whether the person is 'liked' by peers or not rather than objective factors.</p>
<p>The tenure process should focus on teaching. New teachers should be required to interact with and visit the classrooms of our top teachers. The entire focus should be becoming a better teacher. Other assignments and committee work should only be done out of strict necessity. We have four years to try and shape a new teacher; the four years should focus strictly on this pedagogical endeavor.</p>
<p>I strongly believe that we need to bring back the earlier culture of mentoring and supporting nontenured folks around tenure that we used to enjoy here at SCC. This latest "gotcha" culture diminishes morale and chips away at our overall community, creating an environment of fear and distrust.</p>
<p>The tenure review process is not uniform across the campus or even within a single division. Some tenure review committees use the process to nurture/mentor incoming faculty. Others use it as an excuse to reign hell upon them, usually because the President didn't choose the "preferred" candidate and the committee determined by the Department Chair uses the tenure process to get even. Every nontenured faculty person should have access to a tenure process ombudsman. This person should be a senior member of the faculty who is not on any tenure review committee, but is completely versed in the tenure process and is available to answer questions and can step in and act as an intermediary should the tenure review start to be abused by either faculty or administration. This person should be appointed by the academic senate president and there appointment should be confirmed by a vote of the academic senate. The tenure ombudsman could be asked to step in and help out by either the person earning tenure, by the faculty on that person's committee, or by the administrator. There duties would include answering process questions, mediating disputes and misunderstandings, suggesting ways to prevent disputes and misunderstandings from blowing up into complete messes. This position would be in addition to the current process not a replacement for it. This ombudsman</p>

would also be able to document any difficulties or concerns that occur and whether or not the nontenured faculty was given fair treatment. That could then become part of their tenure review packet. Just some thoughts, because in my opinion the process is neither fair nor just and has in multiple instances been abused.

We need to treat our probationary colleagues as fully our colleagues. Too often they have been given the impression that they live on a soap bubble. If they displease us - they are gone. We need to mentor them instead of relaying some vague threat.

I'm not sure if this is currently available, however, I wish I was given a document that outlines the timeline of the tenure review process. Providing the faculty with a 4 year projection timeline with check points along the timeline would be beneficial.

The colleague surveys could be a useful tool for faculty to know whether they need to do more to engage with the campus community, but they are often used as a way of insulting the faculty member being evaluated because the reviewer can hide behind their anonymity. If they were very useful, tenured faculty would still do them.

The colleague surveys are pointless. I've received surveys for individuals I hardly know. We never have an opportunity to sit in on our peers' classes, so I'm not sure why I would be qualified to comment on their teaching. The student evaluations are also problematic. They are given early in the semester before students have a chance to know us. The way the process currently operates is incredibly stressful. Having a tenured faculty member as a mentor would improve the process greatly. I also think it would be great for untenured faculty members to sit in on some of the classes of tenured folks who are respected for their teaching. That would be way more useful than Faculty Institute. The culture around tenure at SCC needs to change as well. We are told during Faculty Institute that we have nothing to fear, but I have heard so many warnings from tenured faculty members, e.g. "Don't comment on an issue until after you get tenure." This has happened to me more times than I can count and contributes to the culture of fear.

The tenure review process is not done consistently from dean to dean, department to department, or even college to college. Additionally, the colleague surveys are almost meaningless. Since we don't get to decide who fills them out, we are often evaluated by faculty with whom we don't regularly work. Answers on the survey are often "I don't know," and these answers negatively affect your overall score. If the surveys are going to include "I don't know" answers, these should not be counted against the faculty member being evaluated. Also, for the dean/colleague observations, some departments announce when the evaluators will be in the classroom, some allow the faculty member to pick a day, and some do evaluations as a surprise. This inconsistency makes the tenure review process inequitable. Finally, students who happen to be absent at the time that student surveys are done do not get a chance to submit a survey when they return. I am glad that you are looking at this process. I think that whatever processes/procedures are put in place need to be applied equally to all faculty.

Standardization of processes makes Tenure process equitable. Not all Administrative staff are fair and equitable

Appears to need a great deal of clarification. Recently hired faculty seem to have been taught to expect the worst. Very uncomfortable 4 years unnecessarily.

People get tenure who shouldn't. You can be a mediocre teacher and treat other employees poorly as long as you are in a protected class.

In my 14 yrs at SCC and have evaluated numerous faculty thru tenure process, I have found that the process is highly inconsistent across depts. next, it is mostly a biased and likeability ranking, not a fair and objective assessment of the faculty. Something must be changed to change this highly politically charged tenure evaluation process of our new faculty.

Although not useful toward awarding the next immediate contract, Spring evaluations should automatically be done in the first 2 years of the process. It is difficult to know about all aspects of a new faculty in their first 8-12 weeks in campus. Expectations of faculty increase during their time here (ex involvement outside of the classroom, both in the department and campuswide). The colleague surveys are extremely useful as there is much more to how a faculty member helps our campus than just teaching. There needs to be consistency in who receives colleague surveys should be consistent (ex all department faculty and staff and chairs of committees served on). As a numerical rating system is used and averaged adding on more and more people, especially those that the person doesn't necessarily work with on a consistent basis just dilutes the data. If a person does not answer a question or its "N/A" it should not have a score to be averaged in. There should be two options for the 3rd contract; if a faculty member has been on an improvement plan, a one year option seems to fit better than an automatic 2 years.

I think the issue is that faculty in the probationary process are put in this environment of "fear" where faculty are told "wait until you're tenured" or "you're not tenured, yet," which is threatening. On the other side, tenured faculty feel they are of hierarchy and sometimes treat tenure-track faculty poorly. I have been disappointed in the the probationary process where administration is afraid to not tenure someone in addition to tenuring faculty so that the union isn't involved. The mentality among peer evaluators and administrators for the tenure-review process has to change in order to create a non-fear environment.

Tenure is hard and there should be mentors especially if you are dealing with interim Administrators who do not know what they are doing and don't care to learn. The surveys from peers can be helpful if there are reasons stated for not so positive reviews. The most important part is to have a seasoned colleague next to you who knows the contract, rules, and regulations. Support would have been nice.

The timeline for denial of tenure ship (renewal of contract) is not ideal. You have to make this decision within the first semester. The tune committee should be given time to make this decision at the end of the second semester. The committee does not have the opportunity to spend enough time to truly evaluate/assess the candidate during the first semester.

Faculty on tenure committees should have the ability to go over their observation with the tenure track instructor before the dean meets with the tenure track instructor, which is not the case in Math and Sciences. It would also be helpful if both tenure track faculty and those on tenure committees received release time each semester for the purpose of mentor ship. 1 PHE each would be great.

Student Surveys are important. Colleague surveys should include faculty not staff unless all departments include both. Portfolio should be online.

More transparency and consistency is needed. Faculty should have formal mentors who are not part of their review committee. The process should be more demystified, but more than the culture around tenure should be changed. The way that faculty and administrators talk about tenure, even when it's intended to be humorous, makes it seem like something scary and negative. Tenured and untenured folks are pitted against each other due to that culture (the hiring committee issue of spring semester, for example, that removed untenured folks from hiring). There seems to be a feeling of the tenure process being a "gotcha" situation where others are looking for reasons not to award tenure rather than a time of mentoring and nurturing. The common advice to untenured faculty is to stay quiet and not reveal anything about themselves or stick their nose out until after tenure. This is very toxic and part of the culture that needs to be changed. More training of administrators, reviewers, and even peers is needed to make the process more equitable and change the college culture from one of fear and negativity to one of nurturing and encouragement.

Increase the review period to 5 years, if possible in law

The narratives in Table 2 show that the faculty have some strong opinions on the process that were not assessed in the closed-ended questions. The faculty provided useful feedback about the current process and how it can be improved. There appears to be a theme of needing more mentorship for probationary faculty. There is also a general theme that faculty feel that the tenure evaluation process is not standardized and that trainings and objective tools for assessment may need to be developed. Another identified area was that of colleague surveys and if they are assessing what they should be assessing, and if they are bring inappropriately due to their anonymous nature.

Conclusion

The taskforce has identified that the current tenure process needs to be revisited and revised for uniformity, transparency and objectivity. It will be under the purview of the Santiago Canyon College's Academic Senate on how to proceed, as it will need input from Santiago Canyon College, Santa Ana College, and under the direction of the union to create a process to address all the needs identified. Since the tenure evaluation process is a contractual issue the taskforce believes the findings presented should be given to FARSCCD to improve the process as they negotiate the contract. In regards to

the contract and the tenure evaluation process here at SCC, the taskforce respectfully recommends the following be considered:

- The probationary faculty being evaluated should receive and view the Administrative Summary Evaluation prior to the meeting (5 or 7 business days) which is common practice at other colleges
- Everyone on the tenure review committee should be present at the meetings with the probationary faculty (not just the supervising administrator)
- The tenure committee should consist of 4 members (one administrator and 3 faculty members, with one faculty being outside of the discipline if possible)
- A majority (3 out of 4) must agree on recommendations-not only the supervising administrator
- The administrator's summary should be written by the "dean" not the "assistant dean"
- Have two evaluations in the first year (one in the Fall and one in the Spring)
- Replace the two-year contract with a one-year contract, with annual employment recommendations
- Option of a possible 5th year if needed
- If the process continues to use colleague surveys, they should be revised to measure peer interaction and cohesion rather than addressing teaching and student interactions which are noted in the classroom observations and student surveys.
- Create a new evaluation form with possible scaled responses in various areas rather than a general forced choice format such as "meets expectations" or "does not meet expectations that can ensure objectivity and have inter-rater reliability
- Have training on how to evaluate faculty to decrease subjectivity
- Assign a mentor to each probationary faculty (someone who is not in their department nor on their tenure committee) to serve as a resource