

Adding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Criteria to Promotion & Tenure Practices: Discussion Notes

Introduction

As campuses explore how to implement their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the fabric of campus life, many are considering how this commitment might be reflected in the evaluation of faculty.

For example, the following was added to the criteria for promotion and tenure at Oregon State University in June of 2015¹:

Oregon State University is committed to maintaining and enhancing its collaborative and inclusive community that strives for equity and equal opportunity. All faculty members are responsible for helping to ensure that these goals are achieved.

Stipulated contributions to equity, inclusion, and diversity should be clearly identified in the position description so that they can be evaluated in promotion and tenure decisions. Such contributions can be part of teaching, advising, research, extension, and/or service. They can be, but do not have to be, part of scholarly work. Outputs and impacts of these faculty members' efforts to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity should be included in promotion and tenure dossiers.

Policy changes like OSU's are a powerful tool for advancing and integrating institutional commitment to DEI. Like all significant policy changes, they also require care and deliberation to achieve shared understanding and effective implementation. At a basic level, including a demonstrated commitment to DEI in P&T processes raises some overarching questions: Do these criteria apply to all faculty? Are they intended to *promote* faculty efforts toward diversity and inclusion or simply *recognize and reward* the faculty who make this contribution? What makes for successful implementation of such changes?

Challenges Associated with Implementing New Policy

The questions inherent in the policy itself are connected to deeper procedural questions. Who determines what contributions count? As P&T decisions are reviewed at the College and University level, how will differences in definitions and activities across departments be reconciled (especially given that such differences may have more to do with the department than the individual under review)?

How are equity, diversity, and inclusion fully integrated into all three primary categories (research, teaching, and service)? Is the intent that each individual extend their attention into all three arenas, or is

¹ <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/faculty-handbook-promotion-and-tenure-guidelines#criteria>

DEI Criteria in Promotion & Tenure Practices

any arena acceptable? What is the institutional responsibility for promoting a full integration in all arenas? How should the institution respond if the majority of individual casebooks only addressed service efforts, with little to no widespread integration into research or teaching?

Significant questions also arise related to faculty rank. How do the expectations embedded in this policy relate to faculty who are beyond tenure and promotion, or during time periods between formal review? How do faculty who are not directly impacted by this requirement mentor younger faculty about its meaning and execution? What procedural and cultural care needs to be taken so that this policy does not create a faculty divide – those who work toward equity, inclusion, and diversity and those who neglect or resist it?

More immediately, how best to conduct 3rd year reviews when such policy changes are being rolled out, given that new requirements will be expected (in some form not yet clarified) by the time these same individuals go up for tenure?

Challenges Associated with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The nature of DEI efforts as a focus of these new expectations presents a number of additional questions.

How will efforts be reviewed, especially since few individuals on P&T committees will have the expertise to evaluate the scope or quality of DEI efforts?

What metrics best reflect activities associated with DEI: time allocated? shifts in awareness? changes in behavior (such as classroom practices)? effectiveness and outcome of activities?

What sources of information about these activities should be included in a dossier? Is self-report sufficient? What role might peer evaluation, or assessment by a chair or other key people, play in identifying and assessing the significance of activities of this type? If the latter is engaged, what is needed to maintain the rigor of peer review?

Some of the most important equity, diversity, and inclusion activities happen in informal spaces – offering support to an individual in need, confronting the inappropriate remark of a colleague, or taking a personal risk that helps others understand some aspect of diversity. How do these activities get factored in given their private and undocumented nature?

How do P&T review committees factor in concerns or evidence that a faculty member is behaving in ways that work against diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., student concerns about biased or insensitive comments in the classroom)? Does the policy become a mechanism for reproofing such behavior? If so, how to proceed in such a way that this functions as a positive motivation rather than a penalizing (possibly legalistic) mechanism?

An individual's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion will often overlap with the more general assessment of whether a candidate is being "a good colleague;" but this distinction is often considered to be outside the bounds of tenure and promotion decisions. How will this be resolved?

DEI Criteria in Promotion & Tenure Practices

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are interrelated but distinct goals supported by different activities. How will faculty and those who evaluate them differentiate and recognize the relevant component parts? For example, should efforts associated with equity be valued equally with those associated with inclusion?

What is the intended target of DEI efforts? For example, are efforts related to students, faculty, and staff all equal? Are internal university-focused efforts equal to activities intended to impact the world outside the university? Would an activity aimed at promoting capitalism and free enterprise in developing countries be equal to efforts to eradicate homelessness or famine? Would an effort aimed at creating more functional teams (regardless of social identity membership) be equal to an effort to address drop out rates of underrepresented minorities?

The contributions of individual faculty have an important intersection with the collectively determined priorities and activities of departments, schools, colleges, and the university as a whole. Conversely, these strategically determined priorities can provide substantive guidance and opportunities for individuals to make an impact. What role do the current institutional commitments (including a Chief Diversity Officer, ADVANCE programs, and departmental efforts) play in promoting, guiding, and evaluating individual efforts? How might data associated with these institutional efforts inform or influence individual efforts and outcomes?

Finally, conditions associated with DEI are, themselves, moving targets. How will societal and campus events impact the way individual efforts are viewed and evaluated?

The Importance of Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as an Academic Endeavor

The current state of discussion of diversity in academia often inaccurately juxtaposes the concepts of diversity and excellence as in, “becoming more diverse means lowering our standards,” or “attention to diversity is a distraction from the real work we’ve come here to do.” In order to successfully integrate activities associated with equity, diversity, and inclusion into the core evaluative procedures in academic life, the academic community needs a more accurate and viable understanding of what diversity is, how it functions, and the specific and fundamental role of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the educational and research environment.

How will the institution contribute to an understanding that allows faculty (and those evaluating them) to effectively engage this commitment rather than framing diversity as working against the foundational considerations that promotion and tenure are intended to serve?

How might the intellectual tasks associated with diversity be articulated, understood, and accounted for in this review process? (For example, how might the evolving discipline of humanitarian engineering explicate the intellectual tasks associated with bringing engineering advances into a developing nations context?)

DEI Criteria in Promotion & Tenure Practices

Implementation Recommendations

Including DEI criteria in Promotion, Tenure, and other review practices requires departmental leadership (those in formal roles, but also the many informal faculty leadership roles that evolve out of faculty governance more broadly) to engage these questions. The implementation process requires pragmatic agreements, opportunities for ongoing education and awareness, and an increasing capacity of the faculty overall to engage these complex questions. It is important that both designated and grass roots leaders embrace the charge of understanding and developing this policy if it is to achieve its intended outcome and, maybe more importantly, to avoid the many lesser outcomes that could easily evolve from this important but highly complex policy change.

Review committees will be at the forefront of these efforts as they work to apply evolving policy to specific individual cases. Providing training and support for these roles will go a long way toward effectively developing and implementing policy change toward its intended outcomes. Furthermore, these bodies must develop public narratives describing the dilemmas and solutions that arise through these efforts. Case studies are a particularly effective mechanism to demonstrate the questions and dilemmas that arise during the review process, and the breadth and depth of how a commitment to DEI may be successfully enacted by individual faculty through a wide variety of activities.

If possible, we recommend a staged roll out. At a minimum, we recommend the following.

Year 1

- **Articulate and document** the questions, ideas, possible activities, and concerns associated with this policy.
 - Determine the critical areas of concern
 - Develop more specific questions, refine the focus of questions or concerns
 - Identify next steps, possibly including discussions with university leadership and/or other Colleges, exploration of potential diversity-related contributions, investigation of the educational benefits of diversity, developing relationships with colleagues from other disciplines or offices who can support evaluation of diversity-related activities, etc.
- **Develop** the education, discussions, and trainings necessary to ensure educated and prepared faculty and proficient reviews.

Year 2

- Pilot test the review process with formal evaluations that do not impact the P&T decision.
- Further develop education, training, and case studies (including mentor training).

Year 3

- Incorporate these new criteria into P&T decisions only as a positive impact (i.e., evidence of E/D/I supports P&T but lack of evidence does not detract from a positive decision).

Year 4

- Full implementation of the policy as it has been developed through the experiences of Years 1-3.

DEI Criteria in Promotion & Tenure Practices

Throughout this process, consider external expertise to:

1. Facilitate discussions
2. Conduct focus groups and/or surveys to collect insights, concerns, and ideas
3. Provide training
4. Guide/advise development and implementation, as well as integration of this process into related activities
5. Document the evolution and implementation of this policy