

Know your rights in evaluation procedures

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By now, most of you have heard that the District faculty evaluation procedures and instruments so badly in need of updating and revising will be with us for a while longer. Just how much longer is unknown. Until the District agrees to fund release time, the Trust Committee will not be reconstituted and the faculty evaluation procedures and instruments in our current contract will remain as they are.

Though most faculty members have probably been evaluated in one way or another, and though specific procedures and instruments are available for review in our contract, it is often hard to grasp just what it is that we should know when we are undergoing that daunting process of evaluation. It is easy to get lost in the language of the contract and difficult to remember that our contract is there to protect us during the process. We may be undergoing evaluations, but we do have rights!

Here some things to remember:

Ask your College Evaluation Guidance Committee

- As participants in the evaluation process, whether we are the evaluator or evaluatee, **we can seek assistance from our College Evaluation Guidance Committee.** The Committee, composed of 3 members—the Presidents (or designees) of the AFT, Academic Senate, and the College—guides the evaluation process and resolves some of the issues that may arise. Additionally, the Committee is responsible for providing orientation and training to those involved in the process. Each college must have an Evaluation Guidance Committee, and we should know who the members of the Committee are.

Request an orientation to the evaluation process

- Whether we're newly hired and scheduled for our first evaluation, or whether we're tenured and being evaluated for the fourth time, **we have a right to request an orientation to the evaluation process.** Being well acquainted with the process allows us not only to understand the procedures that will take place, but it also gives us the power of knowing what our rights are in the various stages of the process.



All faculty have the right to academic freedom

- Any faculty member being evaluated continues to have the right to academic freedom that all other faculty members have.** We need to remember that freedom of inquiry by students and faculty is one of higher education's fundamental missions and that the process of evaluation should not limit our access to that freedom.

The dean's function is only to support, not lead

- Those of us undergoing regular faculty review or tenure review should remember that the **Chair of the evaluation committee coordinates and facilitates all of the committee's activities.** The dean is not primary in these functions. Although the dean does evaluate non-teaching responsibilities for evaluatees and conducts classroom observations for tenure track faculty, the evaluation process itself should always be a peer-driven process. **The dean's function is only to support, not lead, the activities of the evaluation committees and/or peer evaluator.**

The bottom line here is that the dean's role in our evaluation outcome is limited. Too often we

may find a dean controlling the faculty review process and its outcome. Our contract and its faculty evaluation procedures include our **right to have our peers, not our dean, drive the faculty review process and determine the outcome of our evaluation.**

Only permanent faculty can serve as evaluators

- We have the right to be evaluated by tenured faculty with the proven expertise to assess and inform our teaching during our evaluation. Therefore, **only permanent faculty can serve as our evaluators.** If permanent faculty in our discipline cannot be found at our college, then the dean should consult the Evaluation Guidance Committee for advice and efforts should be made to find a solution.

You may appeal a particular evaluator

- Prior to being evaluated, **tenured faculty have the right to know who will be serving on their evaluation committee.** If the evaluatee objects to the evaluator, he/she may seek assistance from the College Evaluation Guidance Committee to appeal the

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membership of the evaluation committee or the peer evaluator. Such appeals may occur, for instance, if the evaluatee believes the evaluator may have a conflict of interest or a bias that may negatively impact the process or outcome of our evaluation.

AFT would like to include the Evaluation Guidance Committee in the procedures for tenure review and adjunct evaluations; for now, however, the Committee is primarily designed to help resolve issues around permanent faculty evaluations. **If adjuncts or non-tenured faculty have objections to tenure committee members or peer evaluators, respectively, then the faculty member has a right to seek the assistance of a Union grievance officer, who may help resolve the issue on his/her behalf.**

You have the right to know evaluation timelines

- **We also have the right to be informed of the timelines that will guide the various stages of our evaluation process.** For example, dates or window periods of classroom observations, post-observation meetings, student evaluations, portfolio deadlines, and meetings with the evaluation committee should be indicated within those timelines.

Observation times should be arranged in advance

- Neither the peer observer nor the dean has the right to “drop in” to observe our classes except on an agreed upon date or window period during an evaluation period. **These observation dates and window periods should always be arranged in advance.**

Observer should meet with you within one week

- After a classroom observation is completed, it is our right to discuss the results with the observer within a reasonable amount of time. The policies and procedures in our contract note that the **peer observer and the evaluatee should meet within one week to discuss the observations.** It is the primary responsibility of the evaluator to make sure this is done. This post-observation discussion is critical in helping the peer evaluator formulate his/her written report of the observation.

Evaluators must consider your explanations

- It is important for us to remember that our **peer evaluators must take into consideration any self-evaluation and explanations that we provide of the classroom events before they formulate the written report of their individual**

judgments of our performance. Many of us forget that this is written in our contract!

You have the right to assess yourself

- **Faculty undergoing evaluations have the right to self-assessment.** Assessments of ourselves allow us to reflect on our own teaching and communicate those ideas to our evaluators. Self-assessments provide yet another way for our evaluators to go beyond what they see in the classroom and in the portfolio.

You have the right to respond in writing

- As evaluatees, **we also have the right to respond in writing to any part of our evaluation.** Doing so provides a documented record of a specific response we’ve had to a specific issue noted as part of our evaluation. We can use these records as tools for our own growth as teachers or, in worse case scenarios, as documents that may help us if we need to file a complaint or a grievance.

If you have a disagreement, you have the right to file a grievance

- **A faculty member who has a disagreement with the outcome of an evaluation has the right to file a grievance,** but such a grievance must be based solely on a claim of misinterpretation and/or misapplication of procedural aspects of “Appendix G: Evaluation Procedures” in our contract. In cases where denial of tenure occurs during the fourth year, the faculty member has the right to file a grievance on any of the above grounds as well as on a claim that the decision was “unreasonable;” however, this right applies only to fourth year tenure track faculty.

As we are evaluated, we often fill ourselves with worry and busy ourselves with preparations for classroom “visitors,” portfolio information, and extra meetings to discuss with our peers what we think we already do well. We need to remember that evaluation procedures were put into place not to keep us in line, but to afford us the opportunity to continue to grow and learn professionally. The evaluation process is a lot of hard work for everyone involved. For those of us being evaluated, the evaluation process should be a constructive, collaborative, transparent, and unthreatening one.

The information above is an attempt to summarize some of the rights that are embedded within the language of our District faculty “Evaluation Procedures.” If we can remember that we have these rights, then perhaps we’ll also know we have some power in what can be a daunting experience for many of us. □