

WMU-AAUP Bulletin

Western Michigan University Chapter of
American Association of University Professors

Subverting the Agreement

Curiouser . . .

In January, a few weeks ago, three out of four chairs in one of our colleges decided spontaneously that they should require external reviews of everyone going up for tenure and promotion in their departments. Thus they sent letters to their faculty informing them of this decision.

Curiously, this very topic had been discussed with the chairs by the dean and associate dean a few days before that.

I attended a meeting with one of the departments and witnessed a presentation by the associate dean about the virtues and value of doing external reviews. The actions of the department chairs were presented as their own choice, a choice they made after they understood the good sense of doing external reviews.

Curiously, one of the virtues associated with doing external reviews was that the provost would provide more funding to those deans who could say they had implemented external review.

Even more curiously, it is only through external reviews that Western's faculty are able to validate that they are doing national caliber, high quality work; clearly, peer reviewed publications and conference presentations, entries into juried shows, and public performances attended by hundreds of people do not constitute validation

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of our work. Only after-the-fact cursory review by external reviewers is adequate validation.

For chairs to unilaterally require external reviews is a violation of the Agreement, and thus grievable, and very clearly a violation of the spirit and intent of the discussion about this topic during negotiations.

The Agreement makes clear (17.§5.5) that external review may be initiated by the candidate, the DTC or DPC, or the department chair. We negotiated very specifically that it may not be imposed unilaterally, and that it should be decided on a case by case basis. For a chair to preemptively require it of everyone deprives the other parties of their right to participate in, and to initiate, such a decision.

A unilateral imposition of external review, in other words, deprives faculty of their rights. We trust that these declarations in the affected college will be withdrawn, and that there will be no further evidence of unilateralism, whether overt or covert.

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