Faculty Committee on the Global Network

FOR INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

Progress Report
On Coordinated Hiring and Tenure Review
Across The Global Network:
April 10, 2017
In the Fall of 2016, Provost Katherine Fleming asked the Committee to study the current state of “coordinated hiring and tenure review,” the process that has been governed by Provost David McLaughlin’s memo (revised June 2015) entitled “BOTH/AND DECISION MAKING IN SEARCHING FOR, HIRING, AND TENURING FACULTY AT NYU ABU DHABI AND NYU SHANGHAI.” (Appendix A)

That document applies to the following members of portal standing faculty: tenure-stream faculty, and Arts and Music Professors.

From October 2016 to March 2017, the committee conducted many interviews, conversations, and listening sessions with a wide range of people, including all three provosts, several portal deans, many NY department chairs, and many portal faculty members, both tenure-stream and contract-stream, both junior and senior.
Findings

The “Both/And” document covers several areas, which we will address individually here. They are: Searches and Recruitment; Appointment; and 3rd Year and Tenure Review.

I. SEARCHES AND RECRUITMENT

For many programs, the “center of gravity” of searches is moving from the Square to the portals, a move that seems to be universally welcomed, and one that makes this the least problematic aspect of the Coordination process. For a detailed discussion of the committee’s findings, please see Appendix B.
The “Both/And” memo states: “NYU Abu Dhabi/NYU Shanghai partner with a New York school, department, or program on searches for tenured and tenure track faculty, Arts Professors, and Music Professors; an offer is made to a candidate only if both the leadership of the portal campus and the relevant New York unit agree.”

It goes on to explain what the NY department’s “agreement” means (at a minimum): “The New York school, department, or program must agree to regard the new hire as eligible to participate in scholarly and instructional activities of the unit, including teaching graduate courses and mentoring PhD dissertations and master’s theses. The unit also agrees to participate in the third-year review and tenure process of the tenure-track candidate.”
The identification of a “partner department” has not always been obvious or easy, largely due to the differences between the disciplinary formations and boundaries that obtain in a department-based system like the Square versus a division-based one like the portals.

The potential mismatch of candidate to department sometimes emerges fairly late in the process, as searches often yield desirable candidates whose profile differs from the one originally envisioned when the position was proposed. Thus, searches can produce desirable candidates who do not fit comfortably into the “partner” department, leading portal deans to seek alternative partners, which in turn produces confusion and even resentment among faculty at both departments, disappointment among faculty at the portal and on the search committee, and an unfortunate introduction to NYU for the candidate.
Another alternative that deans have to resort to when they fail to get a “partner department” to agree to a candidate whom the portal strongly desires is to offer him or her a contract faculty position. From a faculty perspective (perhaps more than from an administrative perspective) this is problematic for various reasons:

- We risk losing candidates who get tenure offers elsewhere.
- We reduce the ranks of tenure-stream faculty, and thus of senior tenured faculty for the future. This in turn delays the schedule for achieving the size of the senior faculty cohort needed for Program and Divisional self-governance.
- Most importantly, it deprives junior colleagues of the kind of appointment that is still the norm for an ideal academic career, namely: a tenure-stream appointment, with the mentoring, opportunity, expectations, and rigorous review that are part of academic growth.
APPOINTMENT (problems, continued)

- **Workload.** The requirement that the faculty (as a whole) of the “partner department” at the Square participate in the search has proved to be too onerous for many departments who are extremely busy with searches and department business of their own. This leads to embarrassingly poor attendance at job-talks, and votes based on little familiarity with the candidate's’ work. This problem is likely to worsen as numbers of searches increase. The model, in short, is unsustainable.

- The **asymmetry** of the process—the fact that units at the Square approve appointments (and participate in portal reviews, see discussion below) but that units at the portals do not have any mandated role in such processes at the Square—is already a point of displeasure and resentment among some faculty at the portal. We fear that negative feeling will be exacerbated as the numbers of standing faculty at the portals increase.
Tenure and Promotion Review

The “Both/And” memo says: “As a part of the process, the docket will be given to the relevant New York school, department or program for review, and its recommendation will be included in the materials considered by the portal’s P&T Committee.”

There is a wide range of practices around how NY departments arrive at the “recommendation” mandated here.
Areas of greatest concern that have emerged include:

Differences between established practices in NY and procedures mandated by the portal *guidelines*. For example, to eligibility for participation: in NY (at least in FAS), only tenured faculty can have input (in the form of assessments, teaching observations, etc.) into tenure cases. At the portals, however, many contract-stream faculty perform key academic leadership—and hence supervisory—roles. It is problematic to exclude their input from the materials made available to the NY department whose assessment is sought.

The asymmetry of the process (discussed earlier, in relation to appointment)
Another kind of asymmetry is also increasingly problematic: the fact that “Both/And” applies to only some groups of standing faculty (tenure-stream, as well as Art and Music professors) but not all.

As our faculty governance mechanisms (notably the two FSCs) are working hard to equalize the work conditions and status of tenure-stream and contract-stream faculty, this asymmetry is regularly experienced as problematic.
Options going forward:

The issue of coordinated hiring and tenure review is deeply entangled with several major concerns:

• concern about portal autonomy and self-determination—both in curricular matters as well as in establishing an institutional identity—and
• concern that the growth of the global network not come at the cost of vastly increased workloads and bureaucracy.
• There is also the concern that Global Network units (portals and sites) will somehow “dilute” the standards and hence the reputation of the University.

All these concerns are sub-texts in all conversations about coordinated hiring and promotion review, and revisions that are made in those areas should explicitly address these concerns.
Options going forward:

OPTION 1:

Strengthen and **clarify** the “Both/And” model by spelling out in much greater detail what the mandated administrative roles of units at the Square will be in portal reviews, and to **lay out a clear schedule and modalities for academic interactions between a junior faculty person at the portal and his or her NYU NY unit**, such that by the time tenure review rolls around, there is substantial mutual familiarity. Such a document would have to address such topics as mentorship, the “integration year,” and 3rd year Review.

The committee’s attempt to draft such a document (as an exercise) highlighted two features of this model that make it deeply problematic going forward: its asymmetry, and its unsustainability (in terms of workload and bureaucracy).
Options going forward:

**OPTION 2:**
Replace mandated, administrative departmental involvement with voluntary intellectual/academic modes of connectivity. In effect, this would mean decoupling “Affiliation” from “Appointment” (and Tenure Review), and make **Affiliation something that follows appointment rather than is a condition of it.**

This second, much more radical option, comes with some obvious risks, especially in the areas that the **“Both/And” policy** was designed to enable: connectivity and quality.
Faculty Connectivity
There is wide agreement that faculty connectivity is crucial to realizing the enormous potential of our university’s Global Network, in the areas of educational quality, student experience, and new knowledge production.

However, many people we talked to expressed the desire to emphasize intellectual/academic modalities for faculty connectivity across the Global Network, and to gradually minimize administrative and mandatory mechanisms for connectivity. In other words: more collaborative research and teaching, more circulation, more sharing of students, and less reliance/insistence on mandatory mechanisms of coordinated hiring and review. Specific ideas that came up are:
With the removal of a departmental vote in New York, the only votes in tenure cases will come from the Faculty Review Committee and the portal’s Promotion and Review Committee. There will have been no moment at which the candidate’s senior colleagues will have voted and discussed the case as a disciplinary cohort. **This is partly due to the divisional (as opposed to Departmental) structure at the portals, but mainly due to the currently small number of senior faculty there.**

At the Square, as at other universities, **departmental self-governance has traditionally been an important hedge against administrative and decanal overreach.** The tenure discussion and vote is a key instance of this self-governance, and as such also a key protection of junior colleagues, linking their assessment to the judgment of their disciplinary colleagues (if only in an advisory capacity, but nevertheless on the record). **How might this current deficit at the portals be remedied?**
NY Departments and portal colleagues who have worked hard to make the “Both/And” model work might feel disappointed if it is changed.

It might help if any change to the model included a “grandfathering” mechanism and be required only for future hires.
Conclusion: Key Principles to guide our choice:

The importance of supporting, protecting, and assisting junior faculty members as they proceed through “academic life cycle” issues at NYU, wherever in the Global Network their appointment may be. In addition to such basic issues as clarity about work expectations and the criteria that will be used in their evaluation, portal junior faculty should also be assured (1) of reliable mentoring by senior faculty in their disciplines, and (2) that they will not be evaluated by units that have not come to know them and their work.

The importance of Faculty Connectivity across the Global Network in all academic areas, including research, curriculum development, and pedagogical innovation. This is an essential feature of the value and promise of NYU’s Global Network, and everything must be done to promote this kind of connectivity without unduly increasing administrative burdens on any unit.