(continued from page 7)

ticipation in this type of decision-making. When choosing candidates to invite for interviews, committee members should identify the factors that would influence those decisions, record them, and evaluate all candidates using the same rubric. At least three independent opinions should be recorded for each candidate before committee discussion, in order to avoid undue influence of an individual's framing (positive or negative) to affect the collective decision.

Similarly, faculty feedback should be collected. Departments should record the percentage of faculty who do not have sufficient information to form an opinion before an open discussion, when opinion will be largely shaped by the presenter.

(C) Department chair responsibilities and training

Many department chairs have the authority to make decisions without faculty consultation. In 84% of responding departments, appointments to search committees are made by the department chair. In some departments, chairs can independently hire lecturers, make decisions about curriculum and teaching assignments, and decide who should be invited to department seminars.

The Office of the Provost should provide training for new department chairs on decision-making processes and offer refresher sessions every three years. Content should be informed by best practices in decision-making.

Use and Usefulness of Student Evaluations

SCOF discussed how teaching evaluations are used in different schools and departments. Anecdotally, in some departments, evaluations are used for promotion but have no consequences for senior faculty. In addition to the variation in evaluation metrics by size and type of course (required versus not), evaluations tend to vary by the degree to which the topic allows "teaching to the test." Also anecdotally, some schools use teaching evaluations to inform decisions about curriculum.

SCOF members expressed concern about the lack of consistent studies of learning outcomes. For example, students of foreign languages were formerly evaluated first according to their progress as measured by carefully constructed tests administered uniformly across all course sections (the so-called "proficiency-requirement"), and only then assigned traditional grades. The implementation of that system in the 1980s required the establishment of a separate category of instructor, the "Lecturer in Foreign Languages." While that specific category of instructor still exists in SAS, the student evaluation system that made the category necessary was expensive and was eventually abandoned.

SCOF members agree that teaching support, including assignment of both teaching assistants and of lecturers who "co-teach" courses, should be fairly distributed.

SAS representatives to SCOF reported the most constructive uses of teaching evaluations. Low-rated evaluations are used to inform the provision of resources and guidance for junior faculty regarding class preparation and student expectations. Evaluations are not used in punitive ways (e.g., to delay or prevent promotions).

SCOF intends to continue its assessment of course evaluations in the next academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

Ani Nenkova, associate professor of computer and information science, on behalf of the SCOF Membership 2020-2021

SCOF Membership 2020-2021

Ariana Chao, Nursing
Eric Clemons, Wharton
Chenoa Flippen, SAS/Sociology
Ani Nenkova, SEAS/CIS, *chair*
Rebecka Peebles, PSOM/Pediatrics
Alexander Reiter, Veterinary Medicine
Bruce Shenker, Dental Medicine
Julia Ticona, Annenberg

Ex Officio Members:
Roger Allen, SAS/Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, PASEF Representative
William Braham, Weitzman Design, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Annenberg, Senate Chair

Report of the Faculty Senate Grievance Commission 2021

The Faculty Senate Grievance Commission of the University of Pennsylvania is an independent committee consisting of three faculty members appointed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. This commission is available to members of the Penn faculty and academic support who allege they have been subject to action that is contrary to the University procedures, policies, and/or regulations, that is discriminatory, or that is arbitrary. During Academic Year 2020-2021, the commission was composed of Connie Ulrich (Nursing, Past Chair), Mitchell Berman (Law, Chair), and Santosh Venkatesh (Engineering, Chair-Elect).

At the time of last year's report, the Commission was reviewing one matter concerning non-reappointment of an untenured faculty member. That matter continued through the summer and, with the Commission's active involvement, was eventually resolved by mutually acceptable agreement among the faculty grievant, their department, and the central administration. In addition, this spring three faculty members from diverse schools and departments separately approached the Commission with preliminary inquiries regarding the Commission's jurisdiction and the nature of the grievance process. In each case, the Chair provided the information requested. In one of the cases, the Chair also spoke with the faculty member at length by phone. As of this writing, none of the three faculty members has pursued the issue further with the Commission.

—Mitchell Berman (Grievance Commission Chair, 2020-2021)