**University of Montana Unit Standards Committee Annual Report**

**Academic Year 2019-2020**

Submitted by: Donna McCrea, Chair

May 1, 2020

# Committee Members:

Abbigail Belcher, Student Representative (2020)

Jackson Bunch, Sociology (2020)

David Erickson, Teaching and Learning (2020)

Donna McCrea, Mansfield Library (2021)
Lee Banville, Journalism (2022)
Matthew Hamon, Visual and Media Art (2022)

Tim Manuel, Accounting and Finance (2022)
Laurie Slovarp, Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences (2022)

# Purpose of the Unit Standards Committee

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) states, “The University Standards Committee shall work with units to bring the Unit Standards into compliance pursuant to Section 10.130 and following the guidelines in Section 10.120.” (CBA 10.100)

# Committee Review Process

Standards up for review are due to the Provost’s Office by September 30. For the past several years the Unit Standards Committee (USC) and Provost’s Office have used Box to share files and used e-mail to communicate about the status of standards.

All USC members review each set of standards. When the USC believes additional work is needed on a set of standards, they are sent by the USC chair back to the department chairperson by e-mail, copied to the Provost’s Office. When a set of standards is approved by the USC the approval information is sent by the USC chair to the department chairperson, dean and provost’s office. In each case, a Worksheet with the USC’s comments is completed and submitted to the unit chair and Provost’s Office along with the standards.

# Standards Reviewed This Year

In a typical year, the USC reviews six or seven sets of standards. This year the USC reviewed standards from 13 units: Physics and Astronomy; Accounting and Finance; Geography; Political Science; Music; Teaching and Learning; Communication Studies; Society and Conservation; Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences; Social Work; Educational Leadership; Public and Community Health; and Journalism. Of these, the committee then did a 2nd review of eight before recommending them to the Provost. The Committee also did a 2nd review of two standards submitted by units during the 2018-2019 academic year: Mansfield Library and Native American Studies. The high number of standards this year is likely due to delays in the rolling review and submission cycle as units participated in the APASP process and responded to changes in unit operations. It looks like the schedule should be back on track for Academic Year 2020/2021.

# USC Comments and Recommendations from the 2019-2020 Review YearGeneral comments

* The USC needs more members from the Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences. That said, the USC is grateful to ECOS for allowing the committee to do its work this year with extra Professional School representatives.
* The CBA was revised by vote of UFA members in early September. The USC chair sent an e-mail to all department chairs whose standards were due on September 30 noting that portions of CBA 10.000 had changed, and pointing to the UFA website where those changes were highlighted. These new changes, along with changes made the previous year to require that criteria for normal, above normal and outstanding be articulated within unit standards, probably resulted in a higher-than-usual number of comments from the USC to units.
* The USC met with a representative of the Provost’s office and the UFA. The Provost’s office provided an updated charge to the committee via memo. The USC heard from both the Provost and the UFA that when the CBA is silent (or in conflict) in a way that leaves the USC uncertain about the appropriate interpretation, the USC should submit our question to both the Provost and the UFA at the same time.
* A future USC should create a ‘things to consider as you revise your standards’ for use by units. This could address common issues and offer examples of language from other units. The USC verified that all standards valued teaching General Education classes as appropriate, included a statement that failure to submit an IPR when due was grounds for a less than normal evaluation, included evaluations of non-tenurable members of the unit, and offered clear standards for all levels of salary increments as per the latest CBA.
* The USC tried to balance the need to standardize the evaluation process to ensure clarity and fairness to all units in accordance with the CBA while recognizing that differences in departments require different standards among the departments. In all cases the USC’s comments were focused on ensuring a faculty member in that unit would understand what is required to succeed and prosper in their career at the University.
* The USC has updated the USC Approval Worksheet and will propose revisions to the Memo sent by the Provost’s Office to chairs of units whose standards are up for review that year. These updates and revisions will ensure that chairs/departments and the USC are consistently referring to the same criteria for the evaluation of standards as is articulated in CBA 10.110 (as revised in Fall 2019.)
* The USC received a number of notes of thanks from units this year, as well as comments that the USC’s review had strengthened and/or added clarity to their standards. The USC also received thanks from the Provost’s Office for the thoroughness of our reviews and recommendations to units.
* The USC is a committee where important work is accomplished, and where every member of the committee contributes. Any faculty member looking for a way to make a meaningful contribution to help ensure a fair evaluation, tenure and promotion process – or who wants to better understand how their own unit’s standards function and could be improved - should consider service on this committee.

## CBA-related comments for consideration by the UFA and Provost’s Office

These comments are included in this annual report in the interest of transparency.

* The CBA specifies what unit standards can and must be used when applying for promotion and tenure, but not when applying for merit. So it is unclear what process should be followed if a merit application period crosses two different sets of standards. Does the faculty member pick which standards to use? And does it matter if the faculty member is tenured or untenured?
* The USC believes that if external reviews are required for tenure or promotion, those reviews should not go just to the department chairperson. They should be included in the IPR, where they can be reviewed by the FEC and formally responded to by the faculty member. This process is not clear in the CBA. The CBA does not require an external review process for promotion or tenure. The USC called attention to standards that did not have an external review process, but did not attempt to mandate them.
* The USC believes that if the FEC requests of the department chairperson - and is provided with - the identity of the author of an anonymized peer evaluation, that information should also be provided to the faculty member under review.
* This year, the Outstanding Performance Award information was added to CBA 10.110.3.a. Because most non-tenure-track faculty will have activity in only one area, is the intent that the faculty member must meet the unit’s criteria for ‘outstanding’ in that area to be recommended for the award? Or would ‘above normal’ activity by a non-tenure track (ntt) faculty member qualify? (At least one unit indicated that ‘above normal’ was acceptable and one unit that ‘outstanding’ was expected. The USC accepted both options this year.)
* Per CBA 10.120, “If the Unit Standards Committee does not approve any specific set of unit standards within forty (40) working days of submission by the unit, those standards shall be forwarded directly to the Provost for consideration.Within fifteen (15) working days upon receipt of the standards, the Provost must approve, reject, or request modifications of the unit standards thus submitted.” Further, CBA 10.120.3.j states, “The unit standards for each respective unit must… be approved by the Unit Standards Committee, the appropriate dean, and the Provost prior to application for evaluation purposes.”

In practice, this timeline is not feasible. Forty days is an unrealistically short turn-around time for the USC to conduct its review, because all standards currently arrive on or very near the same day. It takes a minimum of one week per set of standards for the USC to do a thorough review and discussion. Also, because the USC does not meet during the summer, standards submitted early (or late) may not be able to be reviewed in forty days. The USC recommends that the Committee’s review period be extended to 90 days, and that the CBA should include an option for the USC to request an extension of the review period from the unit and Provost’s Office. (The Provost’s Office may also wish to request extra time for its review.)

* CBA 10.120.3.g states, "The unit standards for each respective unit must...guarantee peer review." “What does ‘guarantee peer review’ actually mean? Does it mean peer evaluation of scholarship? CBA 6.200 (Academic Responsibility) reads: “As a scholar, the person is responsible to the University and to society to keep informed about advances in knowledge and to engage in an active program of research or creative activities as judged by peers.” CBA 10.240 states “individual units may opt to solicit external peer review for the FEC to use to assist the FEC in decisions for promotion and tenure,” but this is a ‘may’ and not a ‘must’. Or, in the context of unit standards, does peer review mean evaluation by the FEC or a FEC member during the evaluation process?
* CBA 10.120.3.h states, “"The unit standards for each respective unit must...ensure consultation between faculty members and chairpersons or deans before each individual recommendation is made final." CBA 10.250 includes, “The department chairperson shall make the record of each evaluation available to the respective faculty members to whom they pertain for his/her review and signature...Each recommendation shall be signed by the faculty member to attest that the faculty member has read it. The chairperson shall then forward a copy of the complete record to the dean by December 15.”

In most units the process seems to be that each evaluative entity (FEC, Chair) finalizes its own evaluation before the process moves to the next level of evaluation, and the faculty member signs to acknowledge receipt at each level of the evaluation. But in at least one unit the process has been that the FEC and Chair consult with each other before evaluation comments are finalized for either entity, and then are given to the faculty member to sign on or before December 15. The USC is not sure whether this is the intent of the CBA (in fact, we believe it is a stated conflict of interest for the chairperson to influence the FEC report.) Clarifying the process within the CBA might be helpful.

* CBA 10.220 states, “Copies of the SEC, FEC, chair, dean and Provost's recommendations from all evaluations during the performance period must be included in the Individual Performance Record (IPR) before transmittal to the dean." In some units these documents are required to be a part of the IPR that goes to the FEC. In other units, this information is provided only to the Dean. What is the intent of the process? Can each unit define this process for themselves?