

# University of Montana Unit Standards Committee Annual Report

## Academic Year 2020-2021

Submitted by: Lee Banville, Chair  
May 1, 2021

### Committee Members:

Student member (unassigned)  
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)  
Yolanda Reimer, Computer Science (2023)  
Dane Scott, W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation (2023)  
Jeff Wiltse, History (2023)

### 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

The committee finalized paperwork for a series of standards previously reviewed. This included final signature pages for seven units: Native American Studies; Forest Management; Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences; Communication Studies; Journalism; Political Science and Public and Community Health.

The Committee also received a response from Teaching and Learning that allowed those standards to be finalized.

The Committee completed review of Sociology that has been sent to the Provost's office as well as approved a revision to Theatre and Dance's standards.

Additionally, the committee reviewed Chemistry and Biochemistry as well as Pharmacy Practice. The Committee requested to review changes to the standards and have yet to receive these.

Two units that received questions from the Committee during the 2019-2020 year – Music and Accounting and Finance – have also not responded as of this memo.

The Committee did not receive standards from one unit, Philosophy, slated for review.

## USC Comments and Recommendations from the 2020-2021 Review Year

### General comments

- Units have been slow to respond to requests for changes from USC. The Committee has wait for more than a year for two units and two other units have not responded a full semester after receiving feedback from the USC. We would encourage the Provost's office to convey to deans and chairs the need for responses in a timely manner so the committee can deliver approved standards during the review year.
- 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.
- 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 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 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.
- 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 and in fact has become more untenable in recent years. 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 10.220 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?