

CHAPTER 4

4. ORGANIZATION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

4.1. Introduction

The Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer of the University. The Provost holds a tenured professorship appointment. Reporting to the Provost are the Associate Provosts, the Deans of the Colleges, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Chief Information Officer (CIO). Academic Directors reporting to the Provost include the Directors of Institutional Research and Assessment, Library, Office of International Services, Disability Support Services, Student Success Center, Center for Collaborative Learning, Testing Services, and the Registrar. The processes for selection, appointment, and reappointment of Deans are given in Appendix A and those for the CIO and Directors are given in Appendix B.

4.2. Academic Colleges

Within Academic Affairs, there are seven degree granting colleges: Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Business Administration; Education; Engineering; Nursing; Professional and Continuing Studies; and Science. Also within Academic Affairs are the Honors College, the Graduate School, and the Library. The Colleges of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Education; Engineering; Professional and Continuing Studies; and Science have departments headed by chairs who report to the dean. The seven degree-granting colleges administer courses of instruction leading to the baccalaureate degree and furnish courses of instruction and faculty in support of graduate degrees administered by the Graduate School. Academic departments and non-departmentalized colleges serve the dual functions of administering courses of instruction leading to degrees and of leading faculty, students, and staff.

4.3. Responsibilities and Duties of a Dean

An academic dean is the chief administrative and academic officer of a college. He or she functions under the supervision of the Provost and must maintain a suitable working relationship with the Provost. The appointment may potentially continue for up to five years; however, the dean is subject to reassignment at any time by the Provost with the concurrence of the President, after consultation with the faculty of the college. Deans sit on the Provost's academic council. A dean holds a tenured faculty appointment in an academic department or college.

An academic dean is responsible for strategic planning for the college, for the administration of college operations, and for leadership of the college and its faculty, staff and students. The dean is the chief academic and operating officer of the college and has overall responsibility for

instructional, research, and service programs; college student services and academic advising; faculty and staff personnel procedures; and budgetary matters. Responsibility for program policies, procedures, and curricula; grading standards; instructional delivery style; and other academic freedom-related areas rests with faculty of the programs. The dean cannot override the traditional prerogatives of the faculty. Information concerning the specific responsibilities and duties of a dean as chief operating officer is available in the Office of the Provost.

A dean communicates to faculty and students in the college, University colleagues, alumni, the community, and the disciplines or professions. The dean provides leadership to his/her college faculty and staff in the development, operation, and improvement of academic and research programs; develops and recommends to the Provost budgets for departments, programs and academic support areas; provides comprehensive programs of academic advising that involve the faculty and academic advisors and supports the University's student recruitment and retention programs; makes recommendations to the Provost for appointments, promotions, tenure, sabbaticals, and terms of employment for faculty and staff within the college; and reviews and recommends actions on faculty leaves and faculty exchanges to the Provost. The procedures on selection, appointment, evaluation and end of appointment of a dean are given in Appendix A.

Assistant or associate deans are appointed by the dean after consulting with the Provost and the faculty of the affected college. The appointment may potentially continue for up to five years; however, an assistant or associate dean is subject to reassignment at any time by the Dean. Normally the appointment of an assistant or associate dean occurs as the result of an internal search; however, external searches may be conducted with the prior written approval of the Provost. Assistant and/or associate deans assist the dean with planning, budget development, personnel matters, student and faculty recruitment and retention, program administration, development, and evaluation, academic advising, and supervision of support functions. An assistant or associate dean holds an academic appointment in the college in which he or she serves. Appendix A describes the procedures on evaluation of assistant and associate deans.

4.4. Establishment, Review, and Discontinuance of a Department or College

A department may be formed only within a college. The department is both an academic unit and an administrative unit of the college. A department has a sufficient number of faculty to be a viable organizational unit and typically offers at least one major or program for an undergraduate or graduate degree. If a new department or college is formed, or if a unit is merged, tenured faculty members transferring to the new or merged department or college will have their tenure transferred.

The performance and relevance of a department are reviewed at least every ten years or in conjunction with a department's professional accreditation review cycle, according to the comprehensive program review description in Section 4.8. Findings and recommendations of review committees are submitted to the Provost. After consultation with the faculty, Department Chair, and Dean, and agreement with the President, the Provost may recommend that a department be continued. Based essentially on educational considerations arising from the

review, or for financial exigency reasons, the Provost may decide to reorganize, merge or discontinue a program, department or college. Examples of educational considerations include program viability, the need to avoid duplication, or to strengthen related programs and does not include cyclical or temporary variations in enrollment. When the Provost, after consultation with the President, decides to merge or discontinue a program, department, or college, the Provost will seek the advice of administrators and faculty within the University, including the Faculty Senate and the appropriate faculty committee(s). The Provost will ensure that the faculty and staff who might be affected by the reorganization, merger, or discontinuance of programs are consulted before a final decision is announced. The decision will consider the needs of the current students and will provide every reasonable opportunity for the students currently enrolled in that program to graduate or transfer to another major with the intent not to slow their progress toward graduation and not to harm the students in any way. When the Provost announces a decision, the faculty of the program, department, or college affected by the decision have the option to file an appeal of the decision to the President within 30 days (expanded to 60 days for decisions made within 30 days of the end of spring semester or during summer). When the appeals period ends, if a final decision is reached to dissolve or merge the program, department, or college, a proposal will be forwarded to The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama for review and approval.

Additional Considerations

The University shall make every reasonable effort to provide other suitable positions for tenured faculty members whose appointments in their present program are lost due to a decision to merge or discontinue a unit, with transferal of tenure, as noted above, for faculty transferred to other academic units. Probationary, clinical, research faculty members and other faculty on annual or multi-year appointments, whose appointments are lost due to a decision to merge or discontinue a unit, may have their appointments terminated with appropriate notification. If placement in another position at the University for a tenured faculty member would be facilitated by a reasonable period of training, financial and other essential support for such training will be offered. If no position is available within the University, with or without reasonable retraining, the tenured faculty member's appointment may be terminated. Notice of termination to faculty members will be provided consistent with policies published in the Faculty Handbook.

If the University is unable to provide suitable employment for a tenured faculty member who is displaced by the merger or discontinuance of academic units, the University shall provide either at least one calendar year of notice or one academic year of severance pay. The choice of which to provide is the President's.

Any tenured faculty member whose appointment is terminated because of merger or discontinuance of a unit, or who believes changes in his/her assignments are tantamount to termination of appointment, and who questions whether the University followed the policy described in this document, is entitled to appeal to the Faculty Appeals Committee. This Committee shall function as a hearing committee and report its findings and recommendations

to the President and to the faculty member involved. The hearing will be limited to questions as to whether the University has followed policy described in the Faculty Handbook; the decision to merge or discontinue the unit shall not be at issue. The hearing need not conform in all respects to a formal proceeding; however, it shall provide the essentials of an on-the-record adjudicative hearing. Upon receiving the recommendations of the committee, the President will make a decision regarding the appointment of the faculty member. The decision of the President shall be final.

4.5. Responsibilities and Duties of a Department Chair

A department chair provides academic and administrative leadership for the department. He or she represents the department faculty, functions under the supervision of the dean, maintains a suitable working relationship with the dean, and is accountable to the University administration for implementing the plans, goals, and policies of the University. The appointment is made by the dean with the concurrence of the Provost. The appointment may continue for up to four years; however, the department chair is subject to reassignment at any time by the Dean with the concurrence of the Provost and after approval of the faculty of the department.

The chair has administrative responsibility for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the department's instructional, research and service programs. Department chairs have the responsibility to provide leadership in formulating and implementing departmental goals and long-range plans; to represent the department internally within the administrative and governance structures of the University and externally with professional and community groups; to ensure that high standards are maintained in curricula, course content, and instruction while promoting student success and retention; to provide a communication link between and among the faculty and the other levels of administration; to prepare course schedules, assign courses and teaching loads, and recommend course scheduling to the dean within the context of meeting student needs; to develop an outstanding faculty of teacher-scholars by encouraging and facilitating their professional development; and to promote an academic environment that is scholarly and humanistic and that affirms the University's nondiscriminatory policies. Department chairs are obligated to build a department strong in teaching capacity; in scholarship and/or creative activity; and in service. This obligation to follow the mission of the department must be thoughtfully considered and respected by faculty and administration. Department chairs are expected to be active participants in all departmental activities and a visible presence in the department. The procedures for selection, appointment, evaluation, and end of appointment of a department chair are given in Appendix B.

4.6. An Academic Program outside the Departmental Structure

Occasionally the University needs to establish an academic program outside the departmental structure, typically for an interdisciplinary program. In such cases, faculty from two or more departments staff the program. A program may be formed within a college or between colleges. The program proposal must identify one department as the primary unit for administrative purposes. The proposal for a new program must follow the then-current guidelines approved by the University and The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama. A faculty member is not

awarded tenure in an academic program outside the departmental structure or college structure in non-departmentalized colleges. The administrative officer of the program is the program chair who is appointed by the dean with the concurrence of the Provost. The program chair reports to a dean who, with the program chair, selects faculty members to form the program committee. The program committee establishes academic policies and procedures for the program and acts on matters requiring faculty decisions pertaining to the program. After the program is fully operational, the program faculty or an elected program committee conducts the program.

4.6.1. Responsibilities and Duties of a Program Chair

The program chair provides academic leadership to the program and is accountable to the dean of the college and to the University administration for implementing the plans, goals, and policies of the University. The program chair has administrative responsibility for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the program's instructional, research, and service components.

4.6.2 Selection and Appointment of a Program Chair

A program chair is appointed by a dean with review and final approval by the provost. The appointment is made after considering the evaluations and advice of the faculty. The dean meets with the program faculty as a group to discuss the duties and responsibilities of the position. Candidates are sought from the tenured faculty members in the program. If no suitable tenured candidate exists, a tenure-earning candidate may be appointed. The faculty is given an opportunity to review the resumes of the candidates and to vote on the choices available. The dean chairs all formal meetings to consider a chair.

Upon completion of the search process, the dean solicits from individual program faculty members a summary of their evaluation and advice on each final candidate. In the event that the dean does not secure the appointment of a chair from the list of candidates who have general faculty support, the search process normally shall be continued until a chair acceptable to the dean and the provost is successfully recruited. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the dean will select a chair from those candidates who have general faculty support. Procedures for the reappointment and reassignment of program chairs will follow those established for department chairs. (See Appendix B)

A program chair normally has a calendar-year appointment and is appointed to a four-year term of office. The chair will continue to teach on a regular basis but with a reduced teaching load. The extent of the load reduction and the type of appointment is established for each program by the provost upon recommendation by the dean and depends upon the size and scope of the program's activities.

4.7. Cooperative, Joint, and Shared Programs

In keeping with stated policy of The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama, the University engages in cooperative, joint, and shared programs. Such programs shall follow the stated policy of The Board of Trustees of The University of Alabama and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education Academic Policies/Operational Definitions.

4.8. Comprehensive Program Review

A comprehensive review to evaluate academic programs will be undertaken by the Provost, at least every ten years or in conjunction with the discipline's professional accreditation review cycle. As part of the review process, the unit conducts a self-study. A review committee of faculty along with an external consultant writes reports addressing strengths and weaknesses of the program. Findings and recommendations are submitted to the Provost. Details of the review procedures and follow-up actions are in the Manual for Comprehensive Academic Program Review found in the Office of the Provost or offices of the Deans.

4.9. Responsibilities of the CIO and Academic Director

The academic directors listed in Section 4.1, as well as the Chief Information Officer, provide academic leadership to their unit and are accountable to the Provost and to the university administration for implementing the plans, goals, and policies of the university. The academic director has academic and administrative responsibility for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the unit's mission and functions including but not limited to the unit's functional, administrative, instructional, research, and service components. The procedures on selection, appointment, evaluation, and end of appointment of an academic director are in Appendix B.

4.10. Other Academic Units Reporting to the Provost

4.10.1. Institute for Science Education

The Institute for Science Education (ISE) was established in 1990 to provide a mechanism to assist in solving problems in precollege science and mathematics education. The institute works cooperatively with the Colleges of Science, Engineering, Education and Professional and Continuing Studies. In carrying out its mission to provide leadership and coordination for projects and programs to effect improvement of precollege science and mathematics education, the ISEd works closely with all appropriate elements of business, government, and industry.

4.10.2. Alabama Space Grant Consortium

The Alabama Space Grant Consortium includes seven Ph.D. granting universities, all with space-related research activities. The University is the lead institution. Other members are Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, The University of Alabama, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Tuskegee University, and the University of South Alabama. The Consortium awards fellowships, scholarships, and research grants, as well as provides support for seminars, workshops, and educational outreach programs. There is an active program to recruit individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups into careers in aerospace science, technology, and allied fields.

4.10.3 Faculty Ombudsperson

The faculty ombudsperson is usually a faculty member and is selected, appointed, and reappointed according to the same procedures used for Academic Directors in Appendix B. The ombudsperson's appointment is typically a one-third time appointment during the academic year. Normally, the faculty ombudsperson will serve a three-year term and will be eligible for reappointment. The faculty ombudsperson follows the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice and must undergo the training provided by the International Ombudsman Association.