

**Remarks to the Faculty Senate, at its Meeting of September 10,
2009, on the New PS-36-T**

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First, a personal note on a separate matter: In 2005 a Faculty Senate resolution set up in my honor a cycle of research awards for junior faculty. I am pleased to report that an ample endowment is now in place, and there is enough income to make an award this fall. It will be in the category of mathematics and will carry a cash prize of \$1200. Future years will see awards in humanities and social sciences, and in the natural sciences. I'm of course pleased, gratified, and grateful to all who made it possible.

The PS-36 Committee was established in September of 2002. I served as chair, and I wish today to express my appreciation and admiration to the faculty members who served on the Committee during some or all of the next three years: Professors Pratul Ajmera, Emily Batinski, Lou Day, Stacia Haynie, Rick Ortner, Jim Richardson, Roger Seals, Jill Suitor, and Roger Stockbauer.

Hard as it may be to believe, most meetings of the Faculty Senate during those three years included an hour or so of substantial discussions and votes on PS-36. My special thanks to those of you here today who took part in those deliberations and in the voting for the Faculty Senate Resolution of February 17, 2005, recommending a new document to the University. In response, the University has now posted PS-36-T with effective date August 17, 2009. I have watched the process, and I have a number of things to tell you.

Of the first order of importance is the fact that the Faculty Senate, albeit with prodigious effort, has confirmed its historic role at LSU as the primary keeper and author of this body of policy provisions. Our role in personnel decisions is a primary responsibility of University faculty. Sound and carefully written policy is essential infrastructure to bear the traffic of decision processes. In the passage from the Senate recommendation of February, 2005 to the new PS-36-T of August, 2009, the University has deferred to the faculty's understanding of principles, and to the faculty's conceptualization of policy and procedure. The University has followed our recommendations to a remarkably complete degree, both in large, obvious matters and also in subtle and delicate procedural devices and provisions.

The University did make some changes in the substance of what we recommended. In my opinion, these are points of ***second-order importance***, and overall they provide improvements. I will pass over them except to offer two examples. (1) The

Faculty Senate-recommended document of 2005 set forth several specific conditions under which the University would consider stopping the tenure clock for an untenured faculty member. PS-36-T sets forth quite general conditions, perhaps reflecting experience after Hurricane Katrina. (2) The Faculty Senate-recommended document of 2005 mandated the use by deans of faculty advisory committees for initial appointments with tenure and for promotion and tenure reviews, but provided that their advice stop with the dean. PS-36-T asserts the same mandate, but requires that the committees' views go to the Provost. This change will mean that those committees will now be on record, and they need to take considerable care to avoid possible problems, especially since the surrounding provisions that ought to clarify and support this policy change are, instead, something of a mess. See *PS-36-T with Notes for Users* for further commentary.

Finally, not in matters of policy but in points of policy writing, PS-36-T has a few regrettable flaws that crept in like mutations during the four years since the Faculty Senate resolution. Documents of this kind frequently undergo editorial changes like rearrangements, re-wording, insertions, and deletions that seem to be good ideas at the time. Such changes were constantly being made during the deliberations of the PS-36 Committee in 2002-2005, but those were done with care and were checked by many critical eyes. Such changes made during the University review show somewhat less care and attention, were not always done consistently, and resulted here and there in losses of clarity and accessibility, as well as gaps in procedural guidance. So PS-36-T is not at every point quite the clean and elegant document we dreamed of. The annotated version may serve to restore what was lost and prevent problems. Having grumbled in this way, I hasten to add that these are matters of *third-order importance*. The new PS-36-T represents a step forward which is well worth celebrating. We are on solid ground. In the face of a few problems of interpretation to be sorted out, I counsel patience and restraint and a long period of settling-in before considering further changes to the document.

A few words about PS-36-NT: It is a new thing at LSU, having a campus PS that deals comprehensively with personnel decision-procedures for faculty in all the nontenurable ranks. Prior to the issuance of PS-36-NT, campus policies and practices for these ranks have been governed by

- applicable portions of LSU System rules;
- passages in the old PS-36 which could be interpreted to apply;
- administrative memos, for example on the procedures for promotions in the Research series; and
- established practices.

PS-36-NT performs a needed conservative task; it tells us where we stand. It also incorporates some provisions which are genuinely new. PS-36-NT may be described briefly as follows.

- It is consistent with LSU System policies and rules.
- For the most part, it respects the established understandings and practices

on our campus with regard to the nontenurable ranks.

- It incorporates, with appropriate alterations, many provisions from PS-36-T, such as those that allow a unit to adopt its own rules to “further specify and regulate.”
- Subsection VI.A requires a faculty panel procedure for certain personnel decisions - for example, for a reappointment that would entail a continuation of full-time service beyond the seventh year for an Instructor, General Librarian, or Professional-in-Residence.
- Other personnel decisions are left within the province of the chair; or, if so provided in the department’s rules, may require faculty panel involvement. Thus the existing Instructor policies of departments like Math and English may continue to operate largely as they stand.