

To: FSPSPA Evaluation Committee

From: FSPSPA Paul Stoddard

Re: Annual Report, July, 2016 - June, 2017

Date: September 7, 2017

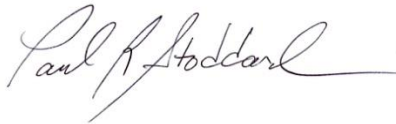
As with the previous years, the past year has had its ups and downs in terms of work for the FSPSPA. Issues seem to arise in bunches, with spells of relative inactivity in between. There were two major cases that have taken a good share of my time in this role. Both involved faculty wishing to appeal negative tenure decisions. The first of these was resolved in the faculty member's favor at the UCPC level. I met several times with the faculty member in one-on-one sessions, reviewed the tenure and appeal packets, and also accompanied the faculty member in meetings with the college council and with the Dean. Most of my counseling was aimed at keeping the faculty member focused on addressing the concerns raised by the department, and on how the member's tenure application was not treated fairly. The second case went through several appeals and worked its way to the UCPC, where ultimately the decision to deny tenure was upheld. There were numerous meetings with the faculty member (on the order of one every other week or so, since early in the fall semester), many of which also included the University Ombudsperson. Again, the counseling was to help the member focus the appeal arguments on demonstrable (rather than perceived) concerns with the review process. A third case that did take more than the usual amount of time involved a faculty member who had been the subject of a student complaint. I accompanied that member to a meeting with the department chair and to an HR counseling session.

In addition to these cases, I met with a handful of others no more than once or twice each, on issues primarily regarding merit evaluations, workloads, help with filing a grievance, and friction with co-workers. As Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor, I also am an *ex officio* member of the Affirmative Action and Equity Compliance committee, which meets monthly. Last year, partially in response to issues I raised with the Provost, I was on a panel to assess University responses to various "bad behavior" scenarios. Some follow-up work from that panel carried over to this past fall. Whether related or not, I have noticed a lack of the type of cases that I had raised with the Provost.

In general, I have found that most of my clients are really looking for a sympathetic ear. While there have been a few rewarding successes in terms of tenure and promotion appeals, most of the time I served mostly as a listening post. I have been able to play devil's advocate with many clients, allowing them to see the other side of the argument, and help them recognize that their supervisor, department, college, etc. are not out to get them. I have been able, as well, to suggest rational (I hope) courses of action for them to try to resolve their issues. Most clients are quite reasonable when dealt with in a sympathetic way. A very few had a somewhat inflated view of what their rights were in a given instance. Most supervisors struck me as genuinely wanting to resolve issues. A few, I think, get stuck in trying to toe the line between my

clients' wishes and university rules and regulations. I'd like to suggest that those in charge of enforcing rules and regulations try to remember that we're all adults, and often have valid reasons for our actions, and therefore they should try to be as understanding as possible. NIU has long had the reputation of having a "family atmosphere." That seems to have eroded somewhat in the last several years.

Finally, as this is my last year as FPSPSA, I would like to offer some observations regarding this position. First of all, I the three-year maximum term is a good idea. I definitely have felt the weight of the position more this year, and am quite ready to turn these responsibilities over to my successor. Second, I suspect the nature and demand of the position may change dramatically once the new faculty union and administration settle on a contract. One of the mandated clauses of any such contract will be to establish a union grievance officer, who may take on many of the types of cases currently handled by the FPSPSA. Third, if this position does continue on in the future, a small budget for advertising would be helpful. Too many times I've heard that people had wished they knew this position existed. Despite my attending new faculty forums and wellness events and so on, faculty and staff remain unaware that there is someone on campus to listen, advise, and advocate for them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul R. Stoddard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor

June 2014-June 2017.