

Oregon State University Faculty Senate - Faculty Consultative Group

Report of the Faculty Consultative Group on the Elimination of Three Tenured Faculty Positions in the College of Health

December 19, 2025

Background

In May 2025, administrators in OSU Extension and the College of Health became aware that federal funding for the SNAP-Ed program was likely to be cut off in the new federal budget being developed in Congress. SNAP-Ed was a program to support healthy eating and healthy lifestyles for those receiving federal assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). OSU Extension, under a contract with the State of Oregon, delivered SNAP-Ed services in the state through its Family and Community Health (FCH) program. SNAP-Ed annual funding was \$9.5 million, constituting approximately 75% of the FCH budget. The loss of these funds would require FCH to significantly cut its activities, threatening the jobs of many Extension personnel whose positions were funded by SNAP-Ed.

Starting in May, the leadership of FCH began planning for the loss of funds, which were indeed cut from the federal budget that was signed into law on July 4. This planning involved determining which programs could not continue to be supported with the greatly reduced funds available, and which faculty and staff members would have their positions terminated as a result. Statewide, over seventy positions within OSU Extension were eliminated.

Among those affected by these cuts were three tenured Full Professors. These three faculty members worked primarily in the FCH program but were tenured in the College of Health (COH). Through the reorganization of the FCH program, their positions in Extension were eliminated, leaving their positions to be funded by the COH. The COH was already experiencing significant budgetary challenges and determined that it was unable to support these three positions. It terminated the positions, and on August 8, 2025, the three tenured faculty members were notified that their positions would be eliminated. Because of their tenured status their positions would continue for 12 months, but would end in August 2026.

On September 17, these three faculty members contacted Faculty Senate President Andrew Valls to request that the Faculty Consultative Group (FCG) be convened under the “Institutional Policy and Procedures for Program Reorganization or Elimination” (IPPPRE) to review the actions leading to the termination of their positions. On October 21, the FCG met and decided to proceed with a full review. Because the FCG would be conducting another review concurrently, the group was split into two subcommittees, each focused on one issue, though this report has been reviewed and approved by the full group. Throughout the process, the FCG has worked closely with Provost Roy Haggerty. The Provost’s Designee, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Alix Gitelman, participated in the meetings of the subcommittee.

To conduct its review, the subcommittee requested additional information from Debbie Craig, Dean of the College of Health, and Kris Elliott, Vice Provost for Extension and Engagement. Both provided the information, and we are grateful for their cooperation. This report is based on the information provided by the three petitioning faculty members, Dean Craig, and Vice Provost Elliott. The information provided by the petitioners was particularly extensive, including letters of appointment, position descriptions and other personnel materials, as well as email communications between leaders in the COH and University Human Resources.

Policy

The “Institutional Policy and Procedures for Program Reorganization or Elimination” was approved by then-President Ed Ray and the OSU Faculty Senate over twenty years ago. As its title suggests, the policy is intended to provide guidelines and procedures for the reorganization or elimination of programs, particularly those “that result in reduction or elimination of a tenured or tenure-track faculty member’s position.” The policy describes a shared governance process by which the Provost and other relevant administrators work with the FCG (representing the faculty) to examine the potential impacts of a program reorganization or elimination and reach consensus on how to implement the changes.

The process described in the policy is prospective, to be undertaken before final decisions are made about the fate of faculty members’ positions. Because this policy was not followed in the case of the elimination of three tenured positions in the College of Health, this review has been retrospective. However, the FCG has attempted to stay within the spirit of the policy by, for example, working closely with the Provost throughout. In addition, there is precedent for a retrospective review under the policy, as demonstrated by previous FCG reports on the reorganization of the 4-H Youth Development Program (December 2019)¹ and on a decision to pause a program in the College of Education (June 2023)².

Findings

The Faculty Consultative Group makes the following findings.

Finding 1: The three petitioning faculty members hold indefinite tenure. Although their job duties sat primarily or entirely in Extension, all three are tenured Full Professors in the College of Health. They therefore have all the rights and protections afforded to other tenured professors at Oregon State University.

Finding 2: The “Institutional Policy and Procedures for Program Reorganization or Elimination” applies to this case. The reorganization of the FCH program ultimately led to the termination of the positions of three tenured faculty members. As noted above, the policy explicitly states that

¹ https://senate.oregonstate.edu/sites/senate.oregonstate.edu/files/2025-12/FCG_Education.pdf

² <https://senate.oregonstate.edu/sites/senate.oregonstate.edu/files/2025-12/FCG%20Report%20191212%281%29.pdf>

its “guidelines are designed primarily for actions that result in reduction or elimination of a tenured or tenure-track faculty member’s position.”

It is true that there are differing interpretations of the policy with respect to the “programs” to which it applies. In her letter to the FCG, Dean Craig suggests that the policy applies only to academic programs and that since FCH is not an academic program, the policy does not apply to this case. Yet Appendix A of the policy, which specifies the meaning of “program” within the policy, defines it quite broadly. It encompasses any program that has the word “program” in its title or “is headed by a person titled ‘dean,’ ‘director,’ ‘chair,’ ‘head,’ ‘coordinator,’ ‘manager,’ ‘superintendent,’ or ‘leader.’” The FCH program is headed by an Associate Dean, Allison Myers, (on behalf of the Dean) and her OSU website indicates that she is “Program Leader, Family and Community Health.” We therefore find that FCH is a program under the definition in the policy. The set of actions in Extension and COH in this case constitute the reorganization of a program leading to the “elimination of a tenured or tenure-track faculty member’s position,” precisely the kind of actions for which the policy was primarily designed.

Finding 3: The “Institutional Policy and Procedures for Program Reorganization or Elimination” was not followed in this case. Having found that the policy applies to this case, we believe that it should have been followed. The fact that the policy was not followed represents a serious failure to engage in shared governance.

Recommendations

The Faculty Consultative Group makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: In similar situations in the future, shared governance processes, including the IPPPRE, should be followed. As the policy states, “the FCG and the University administrators” should attempt to reach consensus on “measures to be taken to find suitable alternative responsibilities at the University for tenured (and, to the degree possible, tenure-track) faculty members who are displaced by a program reorganization or elimination.” In this case, there seems to have been no attempt to find alternative responsibilities for the three faculty members in the COH, nor a discussion with them about a possible reduction in FTE or other changes to their position. The IPPPRE process provides a framework for exploring alternative measures for affected faculty members, one that ensures input from a faculty body.

Recommendation 2: The university should reaffirm the principles and values related to indefinite tenure. Many university documents emphasize the importance of tenure and the long-term commitment that it represents. For example, the Promotion and Tenure Guidelines state:

“Tenure ensures the academic freedom that is essential to an atmosphere conducive to the free search for knowledge and the attainment of excellence in the University. But in addition, tenure also reflects and recognizes a candidate's potential long-term value to the institution, as evidenced by professional performance and growth. Tenure sets universities apart from other

institutions. Faculty are not merely employed by the University but are integral to the educational and research programs of the University; tenured faculty are the community of educators who create institutional stability and an ongoing commitment to excellence. Tenure, therefore, will be granted to faculty members whose character, achievements in serving the University's missions, and potential for effective long-term performance warrant the institution's reciprocal long-term commitment. The granting of tenure is more significant than promotion in academic rank."

Moreover, the Post-Tenure Review Guidelines state:

"Tenure serves both the individual and the institution, and by serving the institution it especially serves the citizens of the State of Oregon. With the award of tenure, the University commits itself to a faculty member in a unique way, and the faculty member acquires a vested interest in the wellbeing of the institution. Tenure is awarded only after an extensive probationary period, during which the highest standards of scholarship, teaching, and service must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of local peers as well as nationally/internationally recognized experts."

Tenure plays many functions, including the protection of academic freedom, but it also is reasonably viewed as providing a high level of job security, entailing a high standard that must be met before tenured positions are eliminated. This case does not reflect the commitment to its tenured faculty members that the university avows, so in the wake of the events described here we believe that an explicit reaffirmation of tenure is called for. While indefinite tenure is not a guarantee of lifelong employment, it should mean that tenured faculty positions are not terminated without a thorough and holistic review of alternatives conducted through a process of shared governance.

Conclusion

As the recommendations suggest, this case raises two large issues, one regarding shared governance and the other pertaining to tenure. We have found that the appropriate policy was not followed in this case, representing a failure of shared governance. The failure of shared governance led to the absence of a process that would have better reflected the values and principles of indefinite tenure.

We hope that this case, along with other issues that have arisen in recent months, prompts the Faculty Senate, its Executive Committee, the Provost, and other senior administrators to engage in conversations aimed at clarification and mutual understanding regarding the requirements and expectations around shared governance. Our concern is that, in the absence of such mutual understanding, similar cases may occur in the future where divergent interpretations of governing documents and institutional norms lead to conflict and disagreement. Cases like this threaten to undermine the trust and cooperative spirit that should characterize relations between the faculty and the administration, so we should work now to foster trust and act in ways that demonstrate that trust is warranted.

Faculty Consultative Group Membership, 2025

Name	Role	Subcommittee
Andrew Valls (Chair)	Executive Committee	FCH
Jake Hamblin (Vice Chair)	Executive Committee	CSSA
Mike Bailey	Executive Committee	FCH
Bruce Dugger	Executive Committee	CSSA
Jessica DuPont	Executive Committee	CSSA
Kerri Goergen-Doll	Executive Committee	CSSA
Nick Dahl	Executive Committee	FCH
Susan Bernardin	Executive Committee	FCH
Eric Hansen	Executive Committee	FCH
Prem Mathew	Executive Committee	FCH
Yvette Spitz	Executive Committee	CSSA
Kaplan Yalcin	Curriculum Council	CSSA
Jim Coakley	Curriculum Council	FCH
John Becker-Blease	Graduate Council	FCH
Louisa Hooven	Faculty Welfare Committee	CSSA
Jonathan Fram	Budgets and Fiscal Planning Committee	CSSA
Alix Gitelman	Provost's Designee	FCH
Rob Stone	Provost's Designee	CSSA

Appendix: Comments from Provost Roy Haggerty

The following comments were provided by Provost Roy Haggerty on December 17, 2025.

The Faculty Consultative Group's work on this matter was undertaken in good faith and under difficult circumstances, and I appreciate the time, care, and seriousness that went into the report. In the spirit of shared governance, transparency, and institutional learning, I am offering the following comments to clarify my perspective as Provost. These comments are intended to supplement the report by identifying areas of interpretive difference and contextual factors that I believe are important for the record, not to relitigate the underlying events or diminish the role of faculty consultation. In particular, I want to be clear about several points where I disagree with the report's conclusions, even though there are no factual errors in the narrative itself.

First, the report ultimately rests on an interpretation of the Institutional Policy and Procedures for Program Reorganization or Elimination (IPPRE) that differs from how College of Health and Extension leadership understand the scope and applicability of that policy, specifically with respect to whether FCH, as an Extension unit rather than an academic program, falls within the

policy's intended coverage. This is a difference of interpretation, not a dispute about facts, and I do not agree that the applicability of the policy in this case is settled or self-evident.

Second, I disagree with the report's assessment that there was no consideration given to the tenured faculty members' potential for service within the College of Health. There is nothing in the report that refutes or otherwise reasonably challenges the College's ultimate decision to eliminate the positions in light of the elimination of SNAP-Ed funding by the federal government, nor does it undermine the College of Health's judgment and determination regarding how best to accomplish its work going forward under materially changed financial circumstances.

Relatedly, while the report characterizes the outcome as a failure to follow shared governance, I do not agree with that conclusion. The actions at issue arose from an abrupt, externally driven federal funding termination of exceptional scale, in a context where OSU also has contractual and statewide obligations tied to Extension. Acceptance of this report should not be read as agreement that the IPPPRE applied in this circumstance, nor that the absence of a prospective process under that policy altered the substantive and correct outcome or constituted a failure of governance.

Finally, I note that the IPPPRE predates both the creation of a faculty bargaining unit and the dissolution of the Oregon University System, and it references governance structures and administrative rules that no longer exist. That historical context reinforces my view that the policy would benefit from clarification and revision so that expectations are clear and aligned with OSU's current governance, legal, and labor landscape.

I do agree with the report's broader call for improved clarity and shared understanding of policy expectations, and I would welcome taking that work up prospectively so future cases, particularly those involving Extension and statewide engagement, are handled with greater alignment across faculty and administration.

I offer these comments with respect for the Faculty Consultative Group and with a shared commitment to strengthening trust, clarity, and effectiveness in our governance processes. I hope they are received in the constructive spirit intended and contribute to future work, jointly undertaken by faculty and administration, to clarify policy expectations and ensure that OSU is well prepared to navigate extraordinary, externally driven circumstances while remaining grounded in our values and mission.