

Clinical Ranks
Existing Documents Presented to University

MEMORANDUM

To: University Senate

From: Richard C. Miller
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: July 6, 2009

Re: Proposal-Clinical Practitioner Ranks

Colleagues,

I hope you are enjoying the summer and getting plenty of well deserved rest and relaxation.

I have been closely following the comments associated with the voting for Clinical Ranks. As some of you know, as a former dean of an allied health school, I am a strong advocate for non-tenure eligible clinical ranks, especially in the allied health sciences and health professions. While I understand many of the comments and concerns expressed by some, the effort to establish clinical ranks in the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) was initiated a few years ago.

One of the most important reasons why clinical ranks are needed at WKU is to enable faculty who work mostly in a clinical environment the opportunity for promotion and to hold a faculty title commensurate with the responsibilities of colleagues at other colleges and universities where clinical ranks are common.

I submit that if WKU is to be competitive in the hiring market, current in the allied health arena, and establish a rigorous path for professional advancement of its clinically-oriented faculty, clinical ranks are essential. Some of you raised legitimate questions regarding promotional criteria. WKU has long regarded the importance of allowing departments/colleges the opportunity to establish discipline-based promotion criteria. Indeed, each of our departments has specific promotion and tenure criteria that are subject to approval by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The same procedure would exist for clinical ranks.

A few weeks ago Julie Shadoan established a sub-committee of the Faculty Handbook Committee to discuss clinical ranks and to address many of the questions raised by faculty. I, and our Faculty Regent, Patty Minter, were members of that Sub-Committee. Following our discussions we were able to agree that clinical ranks were important for WKU and to recommend same to the University Senate.

Some of you have asked....why the urgency? Well, a number of highly qualified faculty, who would ordinarily be classified as "clinical" faculty are in tenure-eligible positions that require terminal degrees. Some of these individuals may be at-risk because terminal degrees are not commonly required by those holding clinical rank titles. As Senators, you are being asked to consider clinical practitioner ranks for the University to bring WKU into the mainstream of clinically-based degree programs.

If any Senator wishes to discuss this with me, please feel free to contact me.
Thank you.