

History of the ASL and Deaf Studies Department's Request for Appointment and Tenure for Dr. Jane K. Fernandes

Prepared by Dr. Karen Kimmel, Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Technologies, June 2, 2006.

1. In November 2004, chair of the ASL and Deaf Studies Department, Dr. MJ Bienvenu informed the dean of CLAST, Dr. Karen Kimmel, that the department members unanimously decided to request that Dr. Jane Fernandes be appointed to full professorship and receive tenure in the ASL and Deaf Studies Department because of her expertise, scholarship, and many contributions to the field of ASL and Deaf Studies. When queried by the dean, Dr. Bienvenu stated that this request was initiated by the department. Dr. Fernandes had been asked if she were interested after the department members discussed the concept. She stated that Dr. Fernandes did not initiate this request.
2. The dean contacted Committee A (Committee on Faculty Welfare) chair, Dr. James Nickerson, to alert him to the request. The dean asked him to review the documents. He stated that there should be no problem with the request.
3. In February 2005, Dr. Nickerson reviewed all applications for tenure, appointment and promotion. He signed the ASL and Deaf Studies Department's request for Dr. Fernandes' appointment to full professor (the A-1 form) and the Department's request for tenure (the A-5 form).
4. The requests for promotion, tenure, and appointments are sent to the dean's administrative assistant and reviewed for completion by a member of Committee A. Dr. James Nickerson, chair of Committee A, reviewed and signed the requests. The dean had pulled the Fernandes file to determine if she held degrees and had experiences that fit with the department's allied fields. The dean noted that Dr. Fernandes has served as chair and faculty member of the Sign Communication Department (formerly the ASL Department and now the ASL and Deaf Studies Department) in 1987 and had taught ASL at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass. and in Hawaii. Her degrees in French and comparative literature fit within the department's allied fields as other members hold degrees in English and English literature. The knowledge of second languages, literatures and cultures was considered to be an important aspect of Dr. Fernandes' potential membership in the Department. (Not thinking of the next step, the dean then filed this request folder in her file cabinet.)
5. The administrative assistant prepared the documents for the Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee review (note that Fernandes' file is in the dean's filing cabinet).
6. In March, the CLAST Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee met to review and make recommendations regarding promotion, tenure, and appointment requests for CLAST faculty. The dean filed their recommendations in her filing cabinet and noticed

that she had left the original request for appointment and tenure for Fernandes in her file and had not given them to the administrative assistant. The dean contacted each member of the Promotion and Tenure Advisory Board during spring break to ask them to review a request from the ASL and Deaf Studies Department for appointment and tenure for Dr. Jane Fernandes. Eight members of the nine-member CLAST Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee reviewed Dr. Fernandes' portfolio individually. (One member was on travel during spring break and was unable to review the portfolio.)

7. Based on the request of the ASL and Deaf Studies Department and the recommendations of the CLAST Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee, and the contents of the Fernandes portfolio, the dean recommended Dr. Jane Fernandes for appointment and tenure in the Department of ASL and Deaf Studies.

8. The dean sent all recommendations for promotion, appointment, and tenure to Provost Jane Fernandes' office for her decisions with the exception, of course, of documents related to her appointment and tenure.

9. The recommendation for appointment and tenure for Dr. Jane Fernandes were sent directly to President Jordan's office.

10. In May 2005, recommendations for appointment and tenure were approved by the Board of Trustees including that of Dr. Jane Fernandes.

11. During the summer 2005, Faculty Chair, Mark Weinberg stated that he did not know that Dr. Fernandes had been recommended for appointment and tenure. He questioned the dean, the ASL and Deaf Studies chair, and the chair of Committee A about the process by which Dr. Fernandes was awarded appointment and tenure to the ASL and Deaf Studies Department. The above information was presented to the chair of the Faculty Senate. Weinberg's suspicions were raised when he reviewed the Fernandes documents and did not find a signed A-5 form (Request for Tenure).

12. The dean stated that she must have lost the A-5 form, but that both the A-1 and the A-5 had been signed. The chair of the ASL and Deaf Studies Department concurred. The chair of Committee A did not recall signing the A-5 form. Despite verification by the chair of ASL and Deaf Studies, the dean of CLAST, and proof that the members of the CLAST Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee reviewed the request, there remained skepticism about the process. The appointment and request for tenure of Jane Fernandes were followed according to the Faculty Guidelines, but the lost document (and the lack of recollection of the Chair of Committee A) raised concerns and suspicion about the process.

13. The dean of CLAST has taken full responsibility for the lost A-5 document.

14. In May 2006, the CLAST dean was cleaning her file cabinet and noticed a plastic file folder lying on the bottom of the file cabinet. The folder was labeled "Request for Appointment and Tenure-Fernandes." The contents of the folder were the original A-1 Appointment form and A-5 Tenure form with the signatures of Dr. MJ Bienvenu, Dr.

James Nickerson, and Dr. Karen Kimmel. The dean immediately alerted the President's Office of the finding. She also sent an email to Dr. MJ Bienvenu and Dr. James Nickerson. After Dr. Nickerson confirmed that he had received the dean's email, the dean sent an email to Faculty Chair Weinberg, Vice Chair Lois Bragg, Secretary Tom Baldrige and members of the Faculty Officers Advisory Committee: Dr. Jane Dillehay, Dr. Janet Pray, Dr. Emilia Chukwuma, Dr. Patrick Brice, Dr. William Marshall, Dr. Michael Moore, Dr. Cristina Berdichevsky, and Dr. Tammy Weiner. The dean also copied Dr. Nickerson, Dr. Bienvenu, and Dr. Fernandes on this email. She sent a copy to the president as well. The email sent on May 25, 2006 can be seen in the accompanying PDF.

15. On May 26, 2006, Dr. James Nickerson met with Dean Karen Kimmel. Dr. Nickerson viewed the documents and verified that he signed both forms. He said that he did not remember signing the forms at all. He apologized through email and in person for the error. He said that any inconsistencies were his responsibility. Dean Kimmel accepts the responsibility for losing the original documents. Dr. Nickerson stated that he would write a letter to the Board of Trustees and the president explaining the situation. The dean asked him to send this information directly to Ms. Patti Kunkle, Executive Assistant to the President and Board of Trustees liaison.

16. On May 26, 2006, copies were made of the original A-1 and A-5 forms, Dr. [Fernandes' CV](#) and the summary sheet. The originals were delivered to President I. King Jordan. Copies were sent to Dr. Fernandes, Dr. Nickerson, Dr. Bienvenu, Mr. Weinberg, Dr. Bragg, Mr. Baldrige, and the members of the Officers' Advisory Council.