



Academic Affairs Newsletter

by Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Thomas J. Calhoun, Jr., a native of Tuskegee, Alabama, has held numerous positions in science education and educational leadership. He is currently the Associate Vice President for Academic Support at the University of North Alabama. Prior to that he was Assistant Dean for Student Academic Services at the University of Washington College of Engineering, after serving as Executive Director of the University of Washington State GEAR UP Project. Early in his career, Calhoun was a laboratory technician in the Biology Department at Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA, where he taught experimental laboratory methods in molecular biology. He subsequently directed a science and technology program at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY. In Chicago, IL he served as the founding principal of North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High School, principal at Hales Franciscan High School, and headmaster at St. Gregory Episcopal School. Additionally, he worked for several years in the Chicago Public Schools' Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning. Dr. Calhoun holds bachelor's degrees from Tuskegee University in Philosophy and Biology, the Master of Science degree in Biology from Clark Atlanta University, the Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration from the University of Chicago, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Washington. In addition to his work in education, Dr. Calhoun is an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He has lectured and preached extensively around the country, and has served as an associate minister in churches in Atlanta, GA, Potsdam, NY, Chicago, IL, and Seattle WA. Currently, he is an associate minister at the Greater St. Paul AME Church of Florence, AL. He holds the Master of Divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, GA.

Baritone Terrance Brown joined the University of North Alabama faculty as Assistant Professor of Music. Dr. Brown completed his Bachelor in Music at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama under the instruction of Dr. Sharon Lawhon and his Master in Music and Doctor in Musical Arts from Louisiana State University under the instruction of Dr. Lori Bade. As an active recitalist and concert artist, Terrance has traveled extensively throughout the United States as a solo artist. Honors for Dr. Brown include being named a regional finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in New Orleans and being selected as a regional finalist for the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Artist Awards. Dr. Brown recently appeared in the title role of the thief in Menotti's *Old Maid and the Thief* with Blue Lake Opera and will appear again with the company this summer in James Niblock's *The Last Leaf*. Dr. Brown's appearance in fall 2008 in the opening gala concert of Opera Louisiane was broadcast nationally on PBS in 2009. Dr. Brown will close his 2010-11 season with a performance at the Lincoln Center in Brahms' *Requiem* with soprano Dr. Tiffany Bostic-Brown.

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Among the most difficult challenges I have faced as Provost since coming to UNA is faculty promotion. The bar is set high. Only about 50% of candidates are successful. The UNA faculty has significantly increased the expectations of colleagues across the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. We are seeing a steady increase in the level of professional accomplishments reflected in portfolios of candidates. That is the good news. The bad news is that we have hard-working faculty who are not successful and their frustration, as well as that of

their colleagues, is apparent. Although we want to retain the rigor associated with faculty promotion, we need to address issues that may create a perceived or real sense of unfairness. Several colleagues have expressed concerns about different dimensions of the process which need attention. We as an academic community will need to address these in 2011-12.

At this time, several faculty are preparing portfolios for submission prior to the October 10 deadline. As a reminder, we now have portfolios of successful candidates on reserve in the library. It may be helpful for candidates to review them prior to submission. It will also be helpful to ensure that eligibility guidelines in terms of service years have been met. Candidates who are close to the minimum are encouraged to check with the academic affairs office.

One issue that arises each year, but may not be readily understood by the academic community, is the role experience as a faculty member plays in the decision-making process, including experience at UNA and in current rank. Both categories are a factor in the review process. Experience at UNA enables candidates to show breadth of accomplishments across time and demonstrates sustained service to the institution, including loyalty to their programs and to the mission of the University. Experience in current rank proves equally important. Although not explicitly stated, the review process emphasizes primarily accomplishments since the most recent promotion, not overall, so time in current rank affords candidates the opportunity to build the quality into a portfolio that merits favorable review.

It may be informative to remind all of us that eligibility for promotion at UNA is based on cumulative experience not experience in current rank. That means that candidates can use cumulative experience determined at initial hire (separate from UNA) to gain eligibility for promotion in rank regardless of time in current rank. Some candidates choose this path and choose to submit a portfolio, sometimes with minimal years at UNA and/or in current rank. My observation since being at UNA is that they face an uphill battle to be successful. It is difficult for reviewers to endorse a candidate without firsthand knowledge of their accomplishments, not only at UNA, but also in their current rank.

As stated earlier, most reviewers focus primarily on professional accomplishments since the last promotion. This also happens to be the case at most other institutions. It may be helpful for UNA to add such language. If minimal time has occurred since the last promotion, the opportunity to demonstrate a high level of productivity across teaching, scholarship, and service is limited. Since success in promotion at UNA is measured against those criteria for all candidates, those with more experience at UNA and in rank (with comparable portfolios) will be more likely to be successful.

One question that may be on the minds of potential candidates is the number of years that constitute a reasonable length of time in current rank to apply for promotion, assuming a portfolio that merits consideration for promotion. For the most recent promotion cycle, the average number of years in current rank for applicants was six and the average number of years at UNA was 7.5. At most institutions the typical number of years required to be in current rank for promotion consideration ranges from 5-7.

As indicated earlier, the current promotion guidelines also do not specify any service requirement in rank at UNA. This will be addressed by the Faculty Senate in the fall based on the changes being proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee for Equity in Tenure and Promotion. The recommendation will be that candidates for promotion to associate professor must have at least three years of their cumulative experience at UNA and candidates for promotion to full professor must have at least five years of their cumulative experience at UNA. The changes do not preclude assignment of rank being determined at the time of hire.

Another policy issue to be considered is that there is no requirement of tenure at UNA to be eligible for promotion, yet many reviewers take such into account. From a practical standpoint, it

seems odd at best to award the lifetime appointment of tenure without also evaluating a candidate's viability for promotion. Hopefully, we can reach a point in the near future when both will be considered concurrently. This would also expedite the review process.

In summary, from my perspective as a participant in the review process for the last two years, I think we should address the following in 2011-12:

Approve the recommendation of the ad hoc committee to add an experience requirement at UNA to eligibility for candidacy.

Find a way to link tenure and promotion to associate professor as a concurrent decision.

Consider adding a requirement for years in current rank to the eligibility guidelines.

Add language to the Faculty Handbook making it clear that the review process is primarily focused on accomplishments since previous promotion.

Few things are more disheartening for a faculty colleague than to be turned down for promotion. We as an academic community need to do all that we can to keep that from happening. We can provide models, give feedback, and be explicit and transparent but we also need to insure that eligibility guidelines are addressed so candidates who do come up for review have the optimal chance for success.