A Brief Guide to the 2015-2016 Faculty Manual Updates

The 2015-2016 Westminster Manual For Faculty contains a number of substantive revisions relating to the faculty contract review and retention process (section 3.6 and parts of section 3.8). These revisions impact all stages of the retention process – peer review, dean’s review, administrative decision-making, and appeal of contract awards. Faculty and administrators should carefully consult these portions of the manual to familiarize themselves with the changes. However, to assist all stakeholders in effectively discharging their responsibilities, the following summary of the most important changes is provided:

• All faculty members and their dean’s should be aware that section 3.6.4.1 outlines a process through which faculty members undergoing peer review may contest the membership of their peer review committee. There are deadlines associated with this process, so faculty and deans should read these provisions carefully.
• All faculty serving on peer review committees this year should be aware that the peer review process (section 3.6.6) has changed. Peer review committees are no longer permitted to conduct optional interviews with faculty, staff, or students. The peer review process is now limited to the mandatory meeting with the dean, a review of the faculty member’s peer review file, and the interview with the faculty member.
• Deans should be aware that section 3.6.9 now contains more specific instructions for how the letter containing their contract recommendations must be written.
• Section 3.6.10(a) now contains an expectation that the chief academic officer will review both the peer review report and the dean’s report upon receipt of these documents. The Chief Academic Officer will review them to ensure that they generally comply with the requirements contained in sections 3.4 and 3.6 of the Manual.
• New section 3.6.12 contains general guidelines to help faculty and administrators determine when it is appropriate to award a 1, 3, or 5-year contract. The most developed guidelines relate to the awarding of a 1-year probationary contract and should be carefully consulted by faculty and administrators.
• Under section 3.8.2.1, any faculty member who receives a contract that is shorter than that for which they are eligible may now seek an appeals proceeding before the Faculty Affairs committee when they believe that the contract award was made in violation of any of the requirements contained in section 3.6 of the Faculty Manual.