

April 24, 2019

ADVICE FOR CHAIRS FROM COMMITTEE ON RANK AND TENURE

These are some issues that arose during the Rank and Tenure process in 2018-2019.

Collaborative Work

Collaboration is an important part of scholarship and creative work in many (if not most) fields, and should be encouraged. Most departmental standards appropriately value collaborative work as highly as individual work. However, particularly in projects that involve large numbers of collaborators, it can be difficult to determine how the candidate is contributing to the project.

- When discussing collaborative work in their narrative, candidates should indicate what role they played in the project.
- In addition, department chairs should specify how author order is determined in their field (i.e. alphabetically, in order of contribution to the paper, or otherwise).

External Evaluators

According to the Faculty Handbook, an application for promotion will “normally” include five external review letters, though the application is considered complete if at least three arrive by the submission deadline. Chairs should:

- Secure at least 5 external reviewers, as a cushion against those who do not submit letters in a timely fashion, or provide letters that do not usefully evaluate the candidates.
- Remind reviewers that they are being asked to provide an analysis of how the candidate’s work meets the standards for scholarship/creative work, not just to make a recommendation.
- Try to ensure reviewers do not have a personal connection with the candidate that would create a conflict of interest (beyond the usual social and professional encounters at professional meetings).
- If there is an important reason to include a reviewer who may be viewed as having a conflict of interest, then provide a rationale for doing so.

Departmental Summaries

The summary of the departmental discussion is one of the most important elements of the candidate’s file. The candidate’s colleagues in the Department are the best situated to evaluate the candidate’s teaching, advising, scholarship/creative work and service with regards to the Departmental Standards. The Departmental Summary should

- Provide analysis (possibly including differing opinions) on whether the candidate has met the standards in each area. It should NOT simply recapitulate the CV or provide personal praise.
- Express any concerns individual faculty members might have about the application (without attribution).

- The Departmental Discussion should include a record of which faculty were present, which were absent, and why they were absent. It is expected that faculty members will make every reasonable effort to participate in the discussion.
- The Scribe should include the name of the Scribe and the date, time and length of the meeting.

Applications for Professor

Since there is no mid-term review process before promotion to Professor, it is important for Chairs to have a discussion with any candidates prior to application, beyond the annual Faculty Service Reports. A candidate may have a string of good annual FSRs without having met the standards for promotion to Professor (for example, for making progress on a large project that is never completed, or revising and resubmitting an article that is never accepted), so it is important to make sure they have reviewed the standards and are confident they have met them before applying.

**Appendix: Template for Solicitation Letter for External Reviewer
Recommended by the Committee on Rank and Tenure 2018-19**

Dear [reviewer's title name]:

I am requesting your assistance on behalf of the [Department/School] in a evaluation of the scholarship [or artistic work] of [candidate name], who is being considered for [tenure and] promotion to the rank of [] professor. I have enclosed a curriculum vitae, personal statement, and sample of publications [or other scholarly or creative product]. I have also enclosed the departmental standards for promotion in the area of scholarship [or creative work].

Please let me know as soon as possible if you will be able to provide a review by [date] at [contact information]; if you are able to provide a review, please also give a brief description of any personal or professional relationships you have with the candidate. Additionally, if you would like copies of [her/his] publications beyond the enclosed sample, please let me know.

We are seeking your assessment as to whether [candidate name]'s scholarship [or artistic work] meets the standards laid out by the department. We are requesting an analytical evaluation, rather than general praise or advocacy. We very much appreciate the time and effort involved in providing a review. **[If appropriate:** In evaluating [candidate name]'s productivity, please take into account that [his/her] tenure clock was extended by [number] years, but research productivity was not expected to increase commensurately.] If you are able to provide a letter of evaluation, please also send a copy of your curriculum vita, and describe in the letter any professional or personal relations you have had with the candidate.

Your letter will be treated as a confidential document to the full extent allowed by law. It will be studied closely by faculty in the department and university promotion committees and officials, and it is intended to be read by no one else.

Thank you for considering this request and for your efforts to help the university make an informed decision in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Name
Chair of XYZ Department