Best Practices for Successful Preparation and Review of Promotion and Tenure Cases

For departments and chairs:

- Department chairs have overall responsibility for the promotion and tenure (P&T) process in their units. Chairs are expected to understand and follow department governance, as well as college-level policy and practice, in managing the P&T review process.

- The department chair is expected to guide the preparation of P&T dossiers that are timely and meet departmental, college, and university guidelines.

- Candidates use their college's standard templates for the CV and portfolio summary (Tab 2). The CV and portfolio summary clearly distinguish accomplishments and activities since the last promotion or initial appointment, in cases for which this is the first P&T action at Iowa State.

- Candidates will prepare and submit a cover sheet and Factual Information Summary as part of Tab 1 of their P&T package. Both templates are posted on the Promotion and Tenure Review website, under the heading, Forms and Materials for Promotion and Tenure Process. The Department Chair is expected to sign both forms indicating that they have reviewed and accepted the completed documents.

- The Position Responsibility Statement (PRS) is unique to each faculty member. The PRS accurately reflects the expectations for each area of responsibility preferably using weighted percentages. The PRS serves as the benchmark for gauging faculty productivity when evaluating P&T cases.

- Teaching loads vary across disciplines and within departments. The P&T materials accurately reflect a candidate's actual teaching load and are consistent with actual teaching activity reported for recent years, not the departmental average. Where a candidate's teaching load diverges significantly from the departmental norm, this divergence is clearly explained.

- Peer teaching evaluations provide a valuable perspective in addition to student ratings of teaching. Each candidate with teaching responsibilities includes a summary of their peer teaching evaluations in Tab 2 (Portfolio Summary). The original peer teaching evaluation reports may be included by the department in Tab 3.

- Student ratings of teaching presented in tabular format are included in every Tab 2 (Portfolio Summary). Evaluations are forwarded using the institutional standard rating scale of 1=very poor and 5=excellent. Comparative departmental data must be provided. Candidates must address any negative trends in their teaching ratings record, particularly sustained deviations from the departmental average.

- While publishing articles in top-tier journals is an important criterion, we expect the department and college to place more emphasis on the impact of the candidate's scholarship.

- Report citations of publications using conventional tools accepted in the discipline, such as the Web of Science database, Google Scholar, and h-index.

- Institutional service activities are included separately from extension or outreach activities.

- The chair is expected to meet with the departmental P&T committee at the start of the process to deliver the committee's charge and review expectations, conflicts of interest, and processes. Once the entire P&T review process is concluded and final decisions are delivered, the chair again meets with the committee to debrief, review outcomes, and assess expectations and process, with an emphasis on communication and continuous improvement. For additional information, review Guidelines for Determining Conflicts of Interest in Faculty Review Process on the Promotion and Tenure Review website.

- The departmental P&T committee's report is evaluative and analytical in its presentation of the case. Disciplinary standards for research/creative activities are provided as context for non-experts evaluating the dossier. Include the names of departmental P&T committee chair and members in the departmental report.

- Departments are responsible for obtaining a letter from external referees. The Faculty Handbook 5.3.3.1.1 specifies a "maximum" of six letters. Departments ought to make every effort to secure six external letters. Regardless of the number, all external letters received are forwarded with the case.

- At least one, but no more than three, of the external letters ought to come from referees suggested by the candidate as supported by the Faculty Handbook 5.3.3.1.1.

- External evaluators are well-known for their scholarship and have a focus similar to that of the candidate. External evaluators may be selected for their expertise in scholarship of teaching and extension/professional practice as well as in scholarship of research. In some cases, an evaluator may only be able to speak to a portion of the candidate's scholarly record. The majority of evaluators are from peer institutions or more prestigious institutions than Iowa State. If an evaluator is from a less prestigious institution, the department must provide an explanation why this individual was chosen. While evaluators are usually academics, it may be appropriate to draw occasionally from industry and government, again, explaining the rationale for this choice.

- Major professors, post-doctoral advisors, and former students ought not be selected as external referees. Co-PIs, co-authors, and research collaborators also ought to be excluded except in very unusual circumstances that must be explained. For additional information, review Guidelines for Determining Conflicts of Interest in Faculty Review Process on the [Promotion and Tenure Review website.]

- Other than in exceptional cases, department chairs do not obtain multiple letters from the same institution – and if that is done, department chairs must explain why.

- A copy of the letter sent to external referees must be included with the materials forwarded to the college and provost.

- The referee log must be completed and forwarded with the candidate's materials. The log documents whether the candidate or department chose each referee. In Part II of the log, departments provide a concise indication of why that evaluator was chosen.

- The biosketch for external referees is brief (no more than a page, preferably shorter, per evaluator). Under no circumstances is the entire vita of any evaluator forwarded with the dossier.

- Whenever possible, only faculty at or above the rank for which a candidate is being considered vote on promotion, e.g., associate professors do not vote on cases for promotion to Professor. We strongly discourage the practice of having untenured faculty vote on cases for P&T. We encourage colleges and departments that allow this to reconsider the practice. Consult college or department governance documents for guidance.

- Faculty input into P&T cases is an important part of shared governance and abstentions undermine this principle. It is the responsibility of each faculty member who is eligible to vote to evaluate the merits of each case and provide a recommendation by casting a vote.

- While it may not be possible for the department chair to address the exact reason for negative votes, the chair is expected to make some effort to address the reasons for negative votes or provide some context where appropriate, especially in the case of split votes.

- If there are loose ends in the case (e.g., status of a Ph.D. student who is expected to graduate soon or who may have graduate, a pending grant, significant publication), the chair conducts the necessary fact-finding and includes that information in their letter.

- The chair's letter clearly states what the standard expectations are for scholarship in the candidate's particular discipline (e.g., "the gold standard" is published conference proceedings, juried exhibits, single-authored journal articles, case studies, etc.).

- The chair's letter to the dean must be analytical, candid, and evaluative. It points out, discusses, and analyzes any weaknesses in the case, and any aspects of the process that are unusual or of concern. We suggest the following format: 1) description of departmental review process; 2) synopsis of the case; 3) evaluation of any concerns; and 4) chair's recommendation on the case.

- The issue of timing of the promotion is explicitly addressed in the chair's letter, particularly if the promotion can be considered early (fewer than six years in rank) or if the interval between promotions is lengthy. The timing is explicitly stated, for example "This is a mandatory case…" or "This case is being considered one year early because…".

- When there are concerns in a candidate's case, the chair's letter must describe the feedback given to the candidate through the written annual or preliminary (third-year) reviews, mentoring interventions, and proactive measures taken by the candidate (e.g., participating in a grant-writing boot camp, receiving training from the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching to address low teaching scores).

- The chair must inform the candidate ***in writing*** of the nature of the departmental and chair recommendations being submitted to the college. This must be communicated ***before*** the case is forwarded to the college. If the recommendation is negative, or a non-mandatory case is not being forwarded, the chair must provide the reasons in writing.

For colleges and deans:

- The dean meets with the college P&T committee at the start of the process to deliver the committee's charge and to review expectations, conflicts of interest, and processes. Once the entire P&T review process has concluded and final decisions have been delivered, the dean again meets with the committee to debrief, review outcomes, and assess expectations and process, with an emphasis on communication and continuous improvement.

- The name of the chair of the college P&T committee and names of the faculty members who served on that committee are included in their report.

- The dean's letter to the provost must be analytical, candid, and evaluative. It points out, discusses, and analyzes any weaknesses in the case, and any aspects of the process that are unusual or of concern. We suggest the following format: 1) description of the review process; 2) synopsis of the case; 3) evaluation of any concerns; and 4) dean's recommendation on the case.

- The issue of timing of the promotion is addressed in the dean's letter, particularly if the promotion can be considered early (fewer than six years in rank) or if the interval between promotions is lengthy.

- The dean must inform the candidate, the department chair, and the college P&T review committee ***in writing*** of the nature of the college-level recommendations being submitted to the Senior Vice President and Provost. If the recommendation is negative, or a non-mandatory case is not being forwarded, the dean must provide the reasons in writing.

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