Best Practices in Tenure and Promotion Evaluation for College Promotion and Tenure Committees

The following guidelines are based upon national guides such as Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation: Advice for Tenured Faculty, Department Chairs, and Academic Administrators (American Council on Education, American Association of University Professors, and United Educators: 2000); Lehigh’s Rules and Procedures; applicable legal requirements; recommendations from the Faculty Personnel Committee; and discussions with college promotion and tenure (P&T) committees. The following six “C”s should govern faculty evaluation at every level:

- Clarity
- Consultation
- Consistency
- Candor
- Caring
- Confidentiality

In all deliberations and recommendations, evaluators at every level (department/program faculty, P&T committee, dean, and provost) must use and adhere to all applicable University policies and procedures, including R&P and the college guidelines on criteria for tenure and promotion. If the college guidelines contradict R&P in any way, the university-wide R&P prevails.

When a question or a “gray area” arises regarding the criteria or procedures (and interpretation questions are not unusual in such matters), the committee chair should consult with the deputy provost for faculty affairs. The deputy provost will consult with others as needed. In the College of Arts and Sciences, the department chair should first contact the associate dean for faculty and staff (Diane Hyland).

Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process and after the process is completed. This includes all confidential materials in the candidate’s file, meetings of the P&T committee to discuss the case, and any meetings related to the case with the department/program faculty, dean, and provost.

Committees must reach their own substantive and independent recommendation on whether or not a candidate merits promotion/tenure.

Committee members should check to make sure that the candidate’s portfolio is complete so that the committee can evaluate the individual’s candidacy with full information. The committee chair should contact the department chair or dean’s office if materials are missing.

The committee may consider new information that becomes available during their deliberations, such as publication of a book or article. The candidate is responsible for making the information known to the department chair, who forwards the information for addition to the candidate’s portfolio.

College P&T committees must ensure that their evaluations of candidates and their recommendations (i.e., votes) are consistent. Specifically, what they write in their letters should support what they are recommending.

All voting members of a college P&T committee must make a clear, unambiguous recommendation. R&P requires that at least five members must vote without abstention. In practice this means that all committee members must vote yes or no. If a committee member is unable to vote yes or no, he/she will be replaced on the committee according to college procedures.

Personal issues such as family, health, or other personal situations must not be considered or discussed when making decisions concerning the granting of promotion/tenure. Committees must not request access to such information, even when the probationary period has been extended.

The standards for tenure will remain the same for candidates who receive tenure clock extensions as for those who do not receive extensions. If the candidate reveals the reason for an FMLA leave or tenure extension, the faculty evaluators will nevertheless use the same standards for tenure as for candidates who do not receive extensions or take FMLA leaves.
• Personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc. must not be considered or discussed when making decisions concerning the granting of promotion/tenure. Discrimination is unacceptable and illegal. Committees should familiarize themselves with and adhere to the University’s Policy on Harassment and Non-Discrimination available at: https://www.lehigh.edu/~policy/documents/2015-06-05%20Policy%20on%20Harassment.pdf

• Lack of a response from an external evaluator must not be judged as a negative evaluation. If an external evaluator reveals in his/her letter an inappropriately close relationship with the candidate, the letter must be disregarded.

• Committee members must not go outside the process to solicit information from external scholars regarding the candidate. The approved R&P process of choosing external evaluators includes consultation with the candidate.

• Committee members must discuss the case only in the presence of the entire committee, not in sidebar conversations. Email discussions of the case are not recommended because of the possibility of forwarding errors, with resultant breach of confidentiality.

• The committee chair must make sure that copies of appropriate documents (for example, written communications to the department regarding the committee’s recommendation and any departmental response) are included in the candidate’s portfolio.

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